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THE WOOD DEMON

WORKS BY ANTON TCHEHOV

Translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett.

TALES: St. Martin's Library Edition.

I. The Darling and Other Stories.
II. The Duel, etc.
III. The Lady with the Dog, etc.
IV. The Party, etc.
V. The Wife, etc.
VI. The Witch, etc.
VII. The Bishop, etc.
VIII. The Chorus Girl, etc.
IX. The Schoolmistress, etc.
X. The Horse-Stealers, etc.
XI. The Schoolmaster, etc.
XII. The Cook's Wedding, etc.
XIII. Love, etc.

PLAYS: St. Martin's Library Edition.

I. The Cherry Orchard and Other Plays.
II. Three Sisters, etc.

LETTERS:

Letters to His Family and Friends.
With biographical Introduction and 8 portraits.
Letters to Olga Knipper.
With Introduction by Olga Knipper.

THE
WOOD DEMON

A COMEDY IN FOUR ACTS

by

ANTON TCHEHOV

Translated by

S. S. KOTELIANSKY

LONDON

CHATTO AND WINDUS

1926

NOTE

THE translator wishes to express his obligations to Messrs. Cassell for their kind permission to quote a few extracts from *The Life and Letters of Anton Tchekhov*. His thanks are also due to the Editor of *The Calendar of Modern Letters*, in which review *The Wood Demon* appeared in the issues for December, 1925 and January, 1926.

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A NOTE ON
"THE WOOD DEMON"

THE original plan and programme of *The Wood Demon* is contained in the following letter of October 18, 1888, written by Anton Tchehov to A. S. Souvorin [1]:

"I have received the beginning of the play. Thank you. Blagosvietlov will go in whole, just as he is. You have done him admirably; from his very first words he is boring and irritating, and if the public has five consecutive minutes of him, it will get just the impression we want. The spectator will say to himself, 'Oh, *do* shut up!' Blagosvietlov must have a double effect on the audience—of an intelligent man with the gout and a grievance, and of a tedious piece of music which has been playing for hours. I think you'll see how far you've succeeded with him when I've sketched out the first Act and sent it to you.

"Of Anouchin I shall leave only the name and 'all that.' His conversation needs greasing. He is a soft, oily, amorous nature, and his talk is soft and oily, too. You've made him abrupt, not genial enough. This godfather must exude old age and indolence. His listening to Blagosvietlov is pure indolence; rather than argue he'd infinitely prefer to have a snooze, or to hear stories about Petersburg and the Tsar and literature and science, or to feed in pleasant company.

[1] This letter and other extracts are taken from *The Life and Letters of Anton Tchekhov*, published by Cassell, 1925. Prince Urusov's letter to Tchehov is here published for the first time.

"I'll remind you of the plan of our play.

"(1) Alexander Platonich Blagosvietlov, a member of the Privy Council, with the Order of the White Eagle and a pension of four hundred a year. The son of a clergyman and educated as a priest. He has got to his position by his own personal efforts. Not a blemish on his past. Suffers from gout, rheumatism, insomnia, and noises in the ears. His property came with his wife. Has a positive mind. He can't stand mystics, dreamers, cranks, poets, or fanatics. He doesn't believe in God, and looks at the whole world from a business point of view. Work, work, work—all the rest is nonsense or humbug.

"(2) Boris, his son, a young student, very sensitive and honest, but utterly ignorant of life. Once he imagined himself to be a Social Revolutionary and arranged to dress like a peasant, but he looked like a Turk. Plays the piano admirably, sings with feeling, writes plays in secret, is always falling in love, spends a lot of money, and invariably talks nonsense. He does very little work.

"(3) Blagosvietlov's daughter. But don't call her Sasha, please. Since 'Ivanov' I'm tired of that name. If the son is Boris, let the daughter be Nastya. (We'll erect an everlasting monument to Boris and Nastya.[1]) Nastya is twenty-two or twenty-four. She is well educated and can think. She's tired of Petersburg, and of the country, too. She's never been in love. Indolent, fond of philosophizing, lies on the sofa to read a book. Wants to marry, but only for the sake of a change

[1] Souvorin's two children were called Boris and Nastya.

and so as not to be left an old maid. Says she could only fall in love with an interesting man. She'd be pleased to marry Pushkin or Edison, but she'd marry an ordinary decent man merely out of boredom. Still, she'll respect her husband and love her children. When she has met and listened to the Wood Demon, she surrenders herself wholly to passion, to the uttermost lengths—hysterics and silly, senseless giggling. The powder, made damp by the Petersburg marshes, dries in the sun and explodes with terrific force. . . . I've thought out an extraordinary declaration of love for her.

"(4) Anouchin, an old man. He thinks himself the happiest man in the world. His sons have made their careers, his daughters are married, and he's as free as the wind. He has never been to a doctor, never had a lawsuit, never been decorated, forgets to wind up his watch, and is friends with everybody. He eats well, sleeps well, drinks plenty of wine, with no after-effect, doesn't grumble at his age, can't think about death. Once upon a time he used to feel depressed and grumble, to have a bad appetite and be interested in politics, but he was saved by a single incident. One day, about ten years ago, at a meeting of the District Council he had to make a general apology to everybody present. After which he immediately felt jolly, regained his appetite, and, being a subjective nature and social to the marrow of his bones, came to the conclusion that absolute sincerity and something like a public repentance is a remedy for all diseases. He recommends the remedy to everybody, Blagosvietlov included.

"(5) Victor Petrovich Korovin, a young squire

of thirty to thirty-three, the Wood Demon. A poet, a landscape painter, extraordinarily responsive to Nature. Once, while he was still a schoolboy, he planted a little birch tree. When it grew green and began to shake in the wind, when it began to whisper and give a little shade, his soul filled with pride. He had helped God to create a new birch tree! Through his act there was one more tree on the earth! This was the beginning of his own peculiar creativeness. He embodies his idea, not on canvas or paper, but in the earth; not with lifeless paint, but with living organisms. . . . The tree is beautiful; but that's not everything; it has its own right to live, it is as necessary as water, the sun, or the stars. Life on earth is inconceivable without trees. Forests condition the climate, the climate influences the character of man, etc., etc. There can be neither civilization nor happiness if the forests fall under the axe, if the climate is rough and hard and the people, too, are rough and hard. . . . The prospect is terrible! He pleases Nastya not with his idea, which is alien to her, but with his talent, his passion, the wide range of his thought. . . . It pleases her that he has swung his mind over the whole of Russia and across ten centuries of the future. When he comes running up to her father, sobbing and with tears, and implores him not to sell his forest to be cut down, she laughs for ecstasy and happiness: at last she has met the man. She never believed in him before, when she saw him in her dreams or read of him in books.

"(6) Galakhov, of the same age as the Wood Demon, but already a Privy Councillor, a rich man,

with a high position in a Government department. A bureaucrat to his marrow, he cannot possibly get rid of the bureaucrat in himself, for it is inherited from his grandfathers and in his flesh and blood. He desires to live from the heart, but he cannot. He tries to appreciate Nature and music, but he does not. He's an honest and sincere man, who realizes that the Wood Demon is superior to him, and frankly admits it. He wants to marry for love, thinks he is in love, tunes himself up to a lyrical key, but nothing comes of it. He likes Nastya as a beautiful, intelligent girl, as a good wife—and nothing more.

" (7) Vassily Gavrilovich Volkov, a brother of Blagosvietlov's late wife. He manages Blagosvietlov's estate. (He ran through his own long ago.) He is sorry that he hasn't embezzled. He didn't expect his Petersburg relatives would be so unappreciative of his virtues. He thinks he is not understood; they don't want to understand him, and he's sorry that he hasn't embezzled. He drinks Vichy and grumbles. His deportment is very dignified. He is emphatic that he is not afraid of generals. He shouts.

" (8) Lyuba, his daughter. Her mind is set on things of the earth. Chickens, ducks, knives, forks, the cattleyard, the prize given by the *Neeva* newspaper, which would be put in a frame if she got it, entertaining guests, dinners, suppers, tea—that's her sphere. She takes it as a personal insult if anyone wants to pour out tea instead of her, and says to herself, 'Ah! I'm no longer needed in this house.' She doesn't like people who spend a great deal of money and do no definite

work. She worships Galakhov for his positiveness. She must come in agitated from the garden and call shrilly, 'How was it Mary and Akulina dared to leave the young turkeys out all night in the dew?' or something like that. She is always strict. With people and ducks as well. Really domestic women are never overpleased with what they've done. On the contrary, they try to make out that their life is slavery. 'There's no time, God forgive me, for a moment's rest. Every one sits around with their arms folded.' Only she, poor dear, has to wear herself to the bone. She lectures Nastya and Boris for their idleness, and she's afraid of Blagosvietlov.

"(9) Semyon, a peasant, the Wood Demon's assistant steward.

"(10) Feodossyi, a pilgrim, an old man of eighty, but not yet grey. A soldier under Nicholas I, served in the Caucasus, and speaks the native language. A congenital optimist. He loves anecdote and jolly conversations, bows to the ground in front of every one, kisses their shoulder, and insists on kissing women. A lay brother of the Mount Athos Monastery. During his life he has collected 300,000 roubles, and sent off every farthing of it to the monastery. He himself lives by begging. He'll call a man a fool and a scoundrel without any regard to his rank or position.

"That's the whole programme. Not later than Christmas you will receive my material for the first act. I shan't touch Blagosvietlov. He and Galakhov belong to you; I renounce them. Most of Nastya is yours, too. I can't cope with her by myself. Boris isn't difficult to manage. Up

to Act IV the Wood Demon is mine, but in Act IV, until his conversation with Blagosvietlov, he is yours. In that conversation I'll have to see that the general tone of the character is kept—a tone that you won't catch.

"In Act II (the guests) you begin again.

"Feodossyi is an episodic character, who, I think, will be needed. I don't want the Wood Demon to be left alone on the stage; I want Blagosvietlov to feel that he is surrounded by a lot of cranks. I've left out of the plan Mademoiselle Emily, an old Frenchwoman, also in raptures over the Wood Demon. We must show how Wood Demons affect women. Emily is a nice old woman, a governess, who has not yet lost her electricity. When she gets excited she mixes up French and Russian. She's a patient nurse to Blagosvietlov. She's yours. I'll leave blanks for her in Scene 1."

* * *

Michael Tchehov, in the Biography of his brother, gives the following account of *The Wood Demon*:

"Wishing now [1] to write something of more significance than farce, Anton welcomed the idea which came to him of *The Wood Demon*. He proposed to Souvorin that they should collaborate in writing the play; but the suggestion that they should work together did not materialize, and

[1] Anton Tchehov's first play *Ivanov*, written by him in 1887, at the age of twenty-seven, was produced the following year in Moscow and in Petersburg, and became an immediate success. Very soon after Tchehov wrote his vaudevilles *The Bear* and *The Proposal* (originally published in *The Novoye Vremya* as feuilletons), which also were instant successes, and have ever since remained favourites on the Russian stage.

Anton wrote the play himself. In the season following the production of *Ivanov*, Solovzov, the actor, left Korsh's Theatre, and, together with Mlle. Abramov, decided to start his own theatre in Moscow. The prospects were not bright. They had no plays with a punch in them. There was only the Christmas season, on which any hopes could be built; and to get full houses it was necessary to have a 'striking' play written by a playwright of some reputation. Solovzov turned to Anton:

"'Give us a hand, Anton Pavlovich, help me out, give me a play.'

"To Christmas week it only wanted ten or twelve days. Solovzov held out alluring terms —a thousand roubles. Anton sat down to write the play, the idea of which he had already thought out. He would write one act each day, and I would make two copies. Solovzov would come and take away the copies and send them by messenger to the Censor in Petersburg. The work was an awful grind: Anton wrote, Solovzov sat near by urging on, I copied. Thus the play was ready in time. It was performed several times, and the author made a thousand roubles, yet Solovzov's productions went up the chimney.

"Anton felt dissatisfied with the play. *The Wood Demon* was written in a hurry, and Solovzov's production was bad. Because she was the lessee of the theatre, Mlle. M. N. G. took the part of the young heroine, though she was an extremely stout woman. To see the *jeune premier*, the actor Roschin-Insarov, making a declaration of love to her was positively incongruous; he called her

beautiful, yet could not get round her to embrace her. Then the glow of the forest fire was such that it aroused laughter. Anton took off *The Wood Demon*, kept it for a long time in his drawer and would not allow its performance. Several years later, in 1898, he re-wrote the play, gave it a totally different construction, and a new name, *Uncle Vanya*."

* * *

In his letter to Souvorin of September 30, 1889, Anton Tchehov says:

"I am writing a big comedy-novel, and have already fired off a salvo or two and a half Acts. Fancy! After the story [1] a comedy is very easy to write. I introduce in the comedy nice, healthy people, half-sympathetic; the end is a happy one. The general tone throughout is lyrical. It is called *The Wood Demon*."

* * *

It will not be out of place here to quote the letter written to Anton Tchehov by his friend Prince A. I. Urusov, and bearing on *The Wood Demon*.

"*January* 27, 1899, Moscow.

"I have read your *Uncle Vanya* carefully, and with grief am bound to say that, in my opinion, you have spoilt *The Wood Demon*. You have cut all the meat off it, reduced it to a conspectus and defaced it. You had a superb comical villain. [The writer evidently refers to the character of Fyodor.] He has vanished now, yet he is needed for the inner symmetry of the play; and this too, though you are particularly good at

[1] The story here referred to is Tchehov's "A Dreary Story," originally published in *The Severny Vestnik*, No. 11, 1889.

describing that peculiar type of young idler, of luxuriant and bright plumage. To the play he was invaluable as introducing a humorous note. The second and, in my opinion, the still graver sin is the change in the development of the play. The suicide in Act III, and the night-scene by the river, at the mill, with the tea-table in Act IV, and the wife's return to the professor—all these were more novel, more daring, more interesting, than the present end [in *Uncle Vanya*]. When I related to the French the contents of *The Wood Demon* they were struck just by this: the hero is killed, and life goes on. The actors, with whom I talked, are also of the same opinion. Of course, *Uncle Vanya* too is good, the best of what is being written nowadays, but your *Wood Demon* was better; and it would be well if you allowed it to be produced. And what an agitation we are having here about *The Seagull*! Had we waited a little while longer, we could have got another two hundred signatures. It is funny to see the faces of the playwrights! I hope you have seen my article in the *Courier*, and were not cross with me.

"The depth of the poetic atmosphere of *The Seagull* is amazing. The acting superb. Don't believe that Mlle. Roxanov is not good: she carries the first three Acts surprisingly well, thoughtfully and minutely; in Act IV she is a shade less impressive, yet very fine. As to Olga Knipper, well, there's no better actress in Moscow for that part. Only Mme. Savina might perhaps compete with her. 'Sorin'-Kaluzhsky is better each time. I have seen the play four times.

Your fanatic URUSOV."

THE WOOD DEMON

CHARACTERS

ALEXANDER VLADIMIROVICH SEREBRYAKOV, *a retired Professor.*

ELENA ANDREYEVNA, *his wife, aged twenty-seven.*

SOPHIE ALEXANDROVNA (*Sonya*), *the Professor's daughter, by his first marriage, aged twenty.*

MARIE VASSILIEVNA VOYNITSKY, *widow of a Privy Councillor, the mother of the Professor's first wife.*

GEORGE PETROVICH VOYNITSKY, *her son.*

LEONID STEPANOVICH ZHELTOUKHIN, *a wealthy young man, who has studied technology at the University.*

YULIA STEPANOVNA (*Julie*), *his sister, aged eighteen.*

IVAN IVANOVICH ORLOVSKY, *a landowner.*

FYODOR IVANOVICH ORLOVSKY, *his son.*

MIKHAIL LVOVICH KHROUSCHOV (*the Wood Demon*), *a landowner, who holds the degree of doctor of medicine.*

ILYA ILYICH DYADIN.

VASSILI, *Zheltoukhin's man-servant.*

SEMYON, *a labourer employed at Dyadin's flour mill.*

ACT I

The garden of ZHELTOUKHIN'S *estate. The manor house with a terrace; in front of the house, on a platform, there are two tables; the large table is set for lunch; on the smaller table are placed zakouski* [*hors d'œuvres*]. *Time: A little after two o'clock.*

[1]

ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE (*coming out of the house*).

JULIE. You'd better put on your grey suit. This one does not become you.

ZHELTOUKHIN. It doesn't matter. Nonsense.

JULIE. Lennie dear, why are you so dull? How can you be like that on your birthday? You are naughty! . . . (*laying her head on his chest*).

ZHELTOUKHIN. No sentiment, please!

JULIE (*through tears*). Lennie!

ZHELTOUKHIN. Instead of all these sour kisses, all these loving glances, and little shoes as watch-stands, which are no damned use to me, you'd better do what I ask you to do! Why didn't you write to the Serebryakovs?

JULIE. Lennie, but I did write!

ZHELTOUKHIN. Whom did you write to?

JULIE. I wrote to Sonya. I asked her to come to-day without fail, without fail at one o'clock. Honestly, I wrote her!

ZHELTOUKHIN. And yet it is past two now, and they're not here. Still, no matter! I don't care! I must give it all up, nothing is to come of it. . . . Only humiliations, and a rotten

feeling, and nothing else. . . . She doesn't take the slightest interest in me. I'm not good-looking, I'm uninteresting, there's nothing romantic about me, and if she were to marry me, it could only be out of calculation . . . for the sake of money!

JULIE. Not good-looking! . . . You've a wrong opinion of yourself.

ZHELTOUKHIN. Oh, yes, as if I were blind! My beard grows from there, from the neck, not as beards should grow. . . . My moustache, damn it . . . and my nose . . .

JULIE. Why do you press your cheek?

ZHELTOUKHIN. It aches again under the eye.

JULIE. It is a tiny bit swollen. Let me kiss it, and it will go.

ZHELTOUKHIN. That's silly!

(*Enter* ORLOVSKY *and* VOYNITSKY.)

[2]

The same, ORLOVSKY *and* VOYNITSKY.

ORLOVSKY. Duckie, when are we going to have our lunch? It's past two!

JULIE. Godpa dear, the Serebryakovs haven't come yet!

ORLOVSKY. How long have we to wait then? I want to eat, my sweet. George too wants his lunch.

ZHELTOUKHIN (*to* VOYNITSKY). Are your people coming?

VOYNITSKY. When I left, Elena Andreyevna was dressing.

ZHELTOUKHIN. They're coming for certain then ?

VOYNITSKY. You can never be certain. Our General may suddenly imagine he has got an attack of the gout, or some other caprice—and then they will stop at home.

ZHELTOUKHIN. In that case let's start. What's the use of waiting ? (*shouting*) Ilya Ilyich ! Serguey Nikodimych !

[3]

(*Enter* DYADIN *and two or three guests.*)

The same, DYADIN *and the guests.*

ZHELTOUKHIN. Please help yourselves. Please (*standing round the table on which the zakouski are placed*). The Serebryakovs haven't come. Fyodor Ivanych isn't here ; the Wood Demon, too, has not arrived . . . people have forgotten us !

JULIE. Godpa, will you have a drop of vodka ?

ORLOVSKY. The tiniest drop. Just so. . . . That'll do.

DYADIN (*adjusting the napkin round his neck*). How superbly you manage everything, Yulia Stepanovna ! Whether I drive across your fields, or walk under the shade of your orchard, or contemplate this table,—everywhere I see the mighty power of your bewitching little hand. Your health !

JULIE. There are all sorts of worries, Ilya Ilyich ! Last night, for instance, our Nazarka forgot to let the young turkeys into the shed, and they spent the night in the garden in the dew, and

this morning five young ones gave up the ghost.

DYADIN. Such a thing oughtn't to happen. A turkey is a delicate bird.

VOYNITSKY (*to* DYADIN). Waffle, cut me a slice of ham!

DYADIN. With particular pleasure. It is a superb ham. One of the wonders of the Arabian nights (*cutting*). I'm cutting it, Georgie, according to all the rules of art. Beethoven and Shakespeare could not do it better. Only the knife is a bit blunt (*sharpening the knife on another knife*).

ZHELTOUKHIN (*shuddering*). W-w-w! . . . Stop it, Waffle! I can't bear it!

ORLOVSKY. Tell us, George Petrovitch, about your people. How are you all getting on at home?

VOYNITSKY. We aren't getting on at all.

ORLOVSKY. Any news?

VOYNITSKY. None. Everything is as it used to be. Just the same now as it was last year. I, as usual, talk a great deal and do very little. My old jackdaw of a mater keeps on jabbering about the emancipation of women: with one eye she's looking into the grave, and with the other she's searching in her clever little books for the dawn of a new life!

ORLOVSKY. And how's Alexander?

VOYNITSKY. The professor has, unfortunately, not yet been devoured by moths. As usual, he sits in his study from morning to night. "Straining his wits, knitting his brows, he composes ode after ode, but no heed is paid

either to him or to them." Poor paper! Sonya, as usual, reads clever books and keeps a very clever diary.

ORLOVSKY. Dear old chap, dear fellow . . .

VOYNITSKY. With my sense of observation I ought to write a novel. The plot is begging to be written. A retired professor, an old hard-tack, a learned owl . . . Gout, rheumatism, megrims, liver, and all sorts of tricks . . . He's as jealous as Othello. He is forced to live on the estate of his first wife, for his pockets can't afford to keep him in town. Always grumbling about his misfortunes, although he's extraordinarily happy!

ORLOVSKY. Well, now!

VOYNITSKY. Of course! Think only what luck! I shan't dwell on the fact that he, the son of a simple sexton, who went to a church school, managed to secure learned degrees and a chair at the University; that he's now an Excellency, the son-in-law of a Senator, etc. All that is of no consequence. But do consider just this. The man has for precisely twenty-five years been lecturing and writing on art, without understanding art in the very least. Precisely for twenty-five years he has been chewing other men's ideas on realism, tendencies, and various other nonsense. For twenty-five years he has been lecturing and writing on what to sensible people has been ever so long familiar, and what to fools is of no interest; that is, for twenty-five years he has been pouring water into a sieve. And along with that—what success! What

popularity! Wherefore? Why? By what right?

ORLOVSKY (*laughing aloud*). It's envy, envy!

VOYNITSKY. Just so, envy! And what success with women! No Don Juan has known such complete success! His first wife, my sister—a charming, gentle creature, as pure as this blue sky, noble, generous, who had more admirers than he had students—she loved him as ardently as only pure angels are capable of loving just as pure and beautiful angels as themselves. My mother,—his mother-in-law,—adores him to this very day, and he still inspires her with sacred awe. His second wife, a beautiful, clever woman,—you've seen her,—married him when he was already old, she gave him her youth, her beauty, her freedom, her brilliance. . . . What for? Why? And she so gifted, such an artist! How wonderfully she plays the piano!

ORLOVSKY. Altogether they are a gifted family. A rare family.

ZHELTOUKHIN. Yes, Sophie Alexandrovna, for instance, has a most remarkable voice. A wonderful soprano! I have never heard anything like it even in Petersburg. But, you know, she rather strains her upper notes. It's a great pity. Give me the upper notes! Give me the upper notes! Ah, if she had those notes, I stake my life, she would be wonderful, do you know. . . . I'm sorry, gentlemen, I must have a word with Julie . . . (*taking* JULIE *aside*). Send a messenger on horseback to

them. Send them a note to say that if they can't come now, at any rate, let them come to dinner . . . (*in a lower voice*). But don't be stupid, don't disgrace me, and write correctly. . . . "Drive" is spelt i-v-e. . . . (*Aloud and tenderly.*) Please, my dear!

JULIE. Certainly (*going out*).

DYADIN. They say that the professor's spouse, Elena Alexandrovna, whom I have not the honour to know, is distinguished not only by spiritual beauty, but by beauty of countenance as well.

ORLOVSKY. Just so, she's a wonderful woman.

ZHELTOUKHIN. She's faithful to her professor?

VOYNITSKY. Unfortunately, she is.

ZHELTOUKHIN. Why unfortunately?

VOYNITSKY. Because this faithfulness is wrong from beginning to end. There's a great deal of rhetoric, but no logic in it at all. To be unfaithful to an old husband, whom you can't bear—that's considered immoral; but to try to suppress one's poor youth and a living feeling—that is not immoral. Damn it all, where's the logic of it?

DYADIN (*in a tearful voice*). Georgie dear, I don't like you to speak like this. Indeed, please, don't. . . . It makes me tremble. . . . Gentlemen, I possess no talent, no flowers of eloquence, but allow me to speak out without elegant phrases, as my conscience prompts me. . . . Gentlemen, one who is unfaithful to a wife or to a husband, is a false person, a person who may be unfaithful even to his country!

VOYNITSKY. Turn the tap off!

DYADIN. But allow me, Georgie! . . . Ivan Ivanych, Lennie, and all of you my dear friends, do take into consideration the vicissitudes of my fate. It is not a secret nor is it enveloped in the darkness of obscurity that my wife, on the day after our wedding, ran away from me with the man she loved, on account of my unattractive appearance.

VOYNITSKY. And she did quite right.

DYADIN. But listen, gentlemen! After that incident I did not violate my duty. I love her to this very day and am faithful to her, I help her in every possible way I can, and I have bequeathed my property to the children, whom she has borne to the man she loved. I have not violated my duty, and am proud of it. Yes, I am proud! I was deprived of happiness, but my pride remains. And she? Her youth has gone, her beauty, under the influence of the laws of nature, has faded away, her lover is dead,—may he rest in peace. And what's left to her? (*Sitting down.*) I speak seriously to you, and you laugh. . . .

ORLOVSKY. You're a kind-hearted man, you've a great spirit, but your speech is too long and you wave your hands . . .

(FYODOR IVANOVICH *comes out of the house. He is dressed in a poddiovka* [*sleeveless overcoat worn by Russian peasants*] *made of the finest cloth; high boots; his chest covered with orders, medals and a solid gold chain with trinkets; has expensive rings on his fingers.*)

[4]

The same and FYODOR.

FYODOR. How do you do, old chaps!

ORLOVSKY (*joyously*). Fyodor, my boy, darling sonnie!

FYODOR (*to* ZHELTOUKHIN). I congratulate you on your birthday . . . be a big boy . . . (*greeting the whole company*). Pater! Waffle, how d'ye do! I wish you all a good appetite!

ZHELTOUKHIN. Where have you been wandering? You should not come so late.

FYODOR. It's hot! I must gulp some vodka.

ORLOVSKY (*with an admiring look at him*). My dear fellow, what a fine beard he has! . . . Friends, he's a beauty! Look at him: isn't he a beauty?

FYODOR. Congratulations to the new-born! (*drinking*). Aren't the Serebryakovs here?

ZHELTOUKHIN. They've not come.

FYODOR. H'm! . . . And where's Julie?

ZHELTOUKHIN. I don't know why she's got stuck there. It's time to bring in the birthday pie. I'll call her instantly (*going out*).

ORLOVSKY. And our Lennie, our new-born, isn't in the right humour to-day. So sulky!

VOYNITSKY. He's a beast!

ORLOVSKY. His nerves must be upset, he can't help it . . .

VOYNITSKY. He loves himself too much, hence his nerves. If you were to say in his presence that this herring here is good, he would at once

feel hurt because it was not he who was praised. Here he comes.

(*Enter* JULIE *and* ZHELTOUKHIN.)

[5]

The same, ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE.

JULIE. How do you do, Fyodor dear? (*kissing one another*). Do have something, dear (*to* ORLOVSKY). Look, godpa, what a present I am giving Lennie (*showing a little shoe to serve as a watch-stand*).

ORLOVSKY. My duckie, my dear little girl, what a fine shoe! What a fine thing!

JULIE. The gold wire-ribbon alone cost eight and a half roubles. Look at the borders: tiny little pearls, tiny little pearls, tiny little pearls. And here are the letters: "Leonid Zheltoukhin." Here's embroidered in silk: "A present to him I love." . . .

DYADIN. Do let me have a look! That is fascinating!

FYODOR. That'll do . . . that's enough! Julie, tell them to fetch champagne!

JULIE. Fyodor dear, that's for the evening!

FYODOR. Why, why evening? Tell them to bring it at once, or I'll go away. 'Pon my word, I'll go away. Where do you keep it? I'll go myself to fetch it.

JULIE. Fyodor dear, in a well-ordered house, you're always a nuisance. (*To* VASSILI.) Vassili, here's the key! The champagne is in the pantry, you know, in the corner, just

by the bag of raisins, in a basket. Only be careful, don't break anything!

FYODOR. Vassili, three bottles!

JULIE. You'll never make a good housekeeper, Fyodor . . . (*serving out the pie to the company*). Have some more, please, gentlemen. . . . Dinner won't be yet, not till six. . . . Nothing good will come of you, Fyodor dear. . . . You're a lost creature!

FYODOR. Now, you've started preaching.

VOYNITSKY. I think some one has driven up. . . . Do you hear?

ZHELTOUKHIN. Yes. . . . It's the Serebryakovs. . . . At last!

(VASSILI *announces the* SEREBRYAKOVS.)

JULIE (*crying out*). Sonechka! (*running out*).

VOYNITSKY (*singing*). "Let's go to meet them, let's go" . . . (*going out*).

FYODOR. How overjoyed they are!

ZHELTOUKHIN. How very little tact some people possess! He lives with the professor's wife and cannot conceal it.

FYODOR. Who does?

ZHELTOUKHIN. George, of course. He praised her so much just now, before you came, that it was even indecent.

FYODOR. How do you know that he lives with her?

ZHELTOUKHIN. As if I were blind! . . . Besides, the whole district is talking about it.

FYODOR. Nonsense. Nobody has yet lived with her up to now, but soon I shall live with her. . . . Do you see? I!

[6]

The same, SEREBRYAKOV, MARIE VASSILIEVNA, VOYNITSKY, *with* ELENA ANDREYEVNA *on his arm,* SONYA *and* JULIE.

JULIE (*kissing* SONYA). My dear! Darling!

ORLOVSKY (*going to meet them*). How do you do, Alexander, how are you, old boy? (*embracing one another*). You are well? Quite well?

SEREBRYAKOV. And how are you, my dear friend? You look fine! I am very glad to see you. How long have you been back?

ORLOVSKY. I returned on Friday. (*To* MARIE VASSILIEVNA.) Marie Vassilievna! How are you, Your Excellency? (*kissing her hand*).

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. My dear! . . . (*kissing him on the head*).

SONYA. Dearest godpa!

ORLOVSKY. Sonechka, my darling! (*kissing her*). My own darling, my little canary bird! . . .

SONYA. As usual, your face is radiant, kindly, sweet! . . .

ORLOVSKY. And you've grown taller, and handsomer, and shapelier, my sweet! . . .

SONYA. How are you getting on? Are you well?

ORLOVSKY. Tremendously well!

SONYA. That's right, godpa! (*To* FYODOR.) I failed to notice the elephant (*embracing one another*). Sunburnt, hairy . . . a real spider!

JULIE. Darling!

ORLOVSKY (*to* SEREBRYAKOV). How are you getting on, old boy?

SEREBRYAKOV. So so. . . . And you?

ORLOVSKY. What can be the matter with me? I

live! I gave my estate to my son, my daughters are married to good men, and now there's no freer man than myself. I'm enjoying myself!

DYADIN (*to* SEREBRYAKOV). It pleased Your Excellency to arrive a little late. The temperature of the pie has considerably gone down. Allow me to introduce myself, Ilya Ilyich Dyadin, or Waffle, as some very wittily call me on account of my pock-marked countenance.

SEREBRYAKOV. Glad to make your acquaintance.

DYADIN. Madame! Mademoiselle! (*bowing to* ELENA *and to* SONYA). Here are all my friends, Your Excellency. Once upon a time I had a considerable fortune, but for domestic reasons, or, as people in intellectual centres put it, for reasons for which the editor accepts no responsibility, I had to give up my share to my own brother, who, on a certain unfortunate occasion, found himself short of seventy thousand roubles of Government money. My profession consists in the exploitation of the stormy elements. I make the stormy waves turn the wheels of a flour mill, which I rent from my friend, the Wood Demon.

VOYNITSKY. Waffle, turn the tap off!

DYADIN. I always bow down with reverence (*bowing down to the ground*) before the luminaries of science, who adorn our country's horizon. Forgive me the audacity, with which I crave to pay a visit to Your Excellency and to delight my soul in a conversation about the ultimate deductions of science.

SEREBRYAKOV. Pray, do come. I shall be pleased.

SONYA. Do tell us, godpa, where did you spend the winter? Where did you disappear?

ORLOVSKY. I was in Gmunden, my sweet, I was also in Paris, in Nice; I was in London . . .

SONYA. Splendid! What a happy man!

ORLOVSKY. Come with me in the autumn? Won't you?

SONYA (*singing*). "Tempt me not without need" . . .

FYODOR. Don't sing at lunch, or your husband's wife will be a silly.

DYADIN. It would be interesting now just to have a glance at this table *à vol d'oiseau*. What a fascinating bouquet! A combination of grace, beauty, profound learning, popu . . .

FYODOR. What a fascinating language! Damn you! You speak as though some one were at work on your back with a plane . . . (*laughter*).

ORLOVSKY (*to* SONYA). And you, my darling, you are not yet married . . .

VOYNITSKY. Good heavens, whom could she marry? Humboldt is dead, Edison is in America, Schopenhauer is also dead. . . . The other day I found her diary on her table: this size! I opened it and read: "No, I shall never fall in love. . . . Love is the egotistical attraction of my ego to an object of the opposite sex." . . . And I wonder what is not there? Transcendental, culminating point of the integrating principle . . . ugh! And where have you got to know all this?

SONYA. Whoever else may be ironical, you ought not to be, Uncle George.

VOYNITSKY. Why are you cross?

SONYA. If you say another word, one of us will have to go home. You or I. . . .

ORLOVSKY (*laughing aloud*). What a character!

VOYNITSKY. Yes, a character indeed, I must say . . . (*to* SONYA). Give me your little paw! Please do! (*kissing her hand*). Peace and goodwill. . . . I won't do it again.

[7]

The same and KHROUSCHOV (THE WOOD DEMON).

KHROUSCHOV (*coming out of the house*). Why am I not a painter? What a wonderful group!

ORLOVSKY (*joyously*). My dear godson!

KHROUSCHOV. My congratulations to the new-born. How do you do, Julie? How fine you look to-day! Godpa! (*kissing* ORLOVSKY). Sophie Alexandrovna! . . . (*greeting the rest of the company*).

ZHELTOUKHIN. How can you be so late! Where have you been?

KHROUSCHOV. At a patient's.

JULIE. The pie has gone cold.

KHROUSCHOV. It doesn't matter, Julie, I'll eat it cold. Where shall I sit?

SONYA. Sit down here . . . (*pointing to a seat beside her*).

KHROUSCHOV. The weather is wonderful, and I have a ravenous appetite. . . . Yes, I'll have some vodka . . . (*drinking*). To the new-born! I'll have this little pie. . . .

Julie, give it a kiss, it'll taste better . . . (*she kisses it*). *Merci!* How are you, godpa? I haven't seen you for a long time.

ORLOVSKY. Yes, it is a long time. I've been abroad.

KHROUSCHOV. I heard about it . . . and envied you. And how are you, Fyodor?

FYODOR. All right, your prayers support us, like pillars. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. How are your affairs?

FYODOR. I must not grumble. I am having a good time. Only, my dear fellow, there's a lot of running to and fro. Sickening! From here to the Caucasus, from the Caucasus back here,—continuously on the move, until I'm dazed. You know, I've got two estates there!

KHROUSCHOV. I know.

FYODOR. I am engaged in colonization and in catching tarantulas and scorpions. Business is going all right, but as regards "my surging passions, keep still!"—all is as it used to be.

KHROUSCHOV. You're in love, of course?

FYODOR. On which account, Wood Demon, we must have a drink (*drinking*). . . . Gentlemen, never fall in love with married women! My word, it's better to be wounded in the shoulder and shot through the leg, like your obedient servant, than to love a married woman. . . . It's such a misfortune! . . .

SONYA. Is it hopeless?

FYODOR. Hopeless indeed! Hopeless! . . . In this world there's nothing hopeless. Hopeless, unhappy love, oh, ach!—all this is just

nonsense! One has only to will. . . . If I will that my gun should not miss fire, it won't. If I will a woman to love me, she shall love me. Just so, Sonya, old chap! If I pick out a woman, I think it's easier for her to jump to the moon than to get away from me.

SONYA. What a terrific fellow!

FYODOR. She won't get away from me! I hardly have time to say three words to her before she's already in my power. . . . Yes. . . . I have only to say to her: "My lady, whenever you look at the window you must remember me. I will it." And she remembers me a thousand times a day. Moreover, I bombard her every day with letters. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Letters surely aren't a safe method; she may receive them, but she may not read them.

FYODOR. You think so? H'm! . . . I have been living in this world for thirty-five years, and somehow I haven't yet come across such phenomenal women as would have the courage not to open a letter.

ORLOVSKY (*looking admiringly at him*). See! My dear son, my beautiful son! I, too, was like that. Precisely, to a degree! Only that I was not in the war; but I drank and threw money about—terrible!

FYODOR. Misha, I do love her, seriously, hellishly. . . . Were she only to agree, I would just give her everything and all. . . . I would carry her to the Caucasus, to the mountains, we should live like singing birds. . . . I should, Elena Andreyevna, guard her, like a

faithful dog, and she would be to me as the marshal of nobility sings : " Thou wilt be the queen of the universe, thou my dearest." Oh, she does not know how very happy she could be !

KHROUSCHOV. And who's that lucky woman ?

FYODOR. If you know too much, you'll age quickly. . . . But enough about that. Now, let's sing from a different opera. I remember, it's about ten years ago—Lennie was still at school then—we were celebrating his birthday as we are now. I rode home—Sonya on my right arm, and Julie on my left, and both held on to my beard. Now, let's drink the health of the friends of my youth, of Sonya and Julie !

DYADIN (*laughing aloud*). That is fascinating ! That is fascinating !

FYODOR. Once, it was after the war, I was having drinks with a Turkish Pasha in Trebisond. . . . All at once he asks me . . .

DYADIN (*interrupting*). Let's drink a toast to friendly relations. *Vivat* friendship ! Here's luck !

FYODOR. Stop, stop, stop ! Sonya, I claim attention ! I am having a bet, damn it ! I am putting three hundred roubles on the table ! Let's go after lunch to play croquet, and I bet that in one round I shall get through all the hoops and back.

SONYA. I accept the bet ; only I haven't got three hundred roubles.

FYODOR. If you lose, you are to sing to me forty times.

SONYA. Agreed.

DYADIN. That is fascinating! That is fascinating!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*looking at the sky*). What bird is that?

ZHELTOUKHIN. It is a hawk.

FYODOR. Friends, let's drink the hawk's health!

(SONYA *laughs aloud.*)

ORLOVSKY. Now, she has started! What's the matter?

(KHROUSCHOV *laughs aloud.*)

ORLOVSKY. Why are you laughing?

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. Sophie! It is not right!

KHROUSCHOV. Oh, I am so sorry! . . . I'll stop presently, presently. . . .

ORLOVSKY. This is laughing without reason.

VOYNITSKY. Those two, you've only to lift up your finger, and they burst out laughing. Sonya! (*lifting his finger*). Look, now! . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Stop it! (*looking at his watch*). Well, I have eaten and drunk, and now I must be off. It's time I went.

SONYA. Where to?

KHROUSCHOV. To a patient. I'm as tired of my medical practice as of an unloved wife, or a long winter. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. But, look here, medicine is your profession, your work, so to say . . .

VOYNITSKY (*ironically*). He has another profession. He digs peat on his estate.

SEREBRYAKOV. What?

VOYNITSKY. Peat! A mining engineer has calcu-

lated with absolute certainty that there is peat on his land worth seven hundred and twenty thousand roubles. It isn't a joke.

KHROUSCHOV. I don't dig peat for the sake of money.

VOYNITSKY. Why do you dig it then?

KHROUSCHOV. In order that you should not cut down forests.

VOYNITSKY. Why not cut them? To hear you, one might think that forests only existed for the courtships of youths and maidens.

KHROUSCHOV. I never said anything of the sort.

VOYNITSKY. What I have had the honour of hearing you say up to now in defence of forests is all antiquated, not serious, and tendencious. Pray, forgive me. I say this not without grounds, I know almost by heart all your arguments in defence. . . . For instance . . . (*raising the tone of his voice and gesticulating, as though imitating* KHROUSCHOV). You, men, are destroying the forests, but they adorn the earth, they teach man to understand beauty and inspire him with a sense of majesty. Forests soften harsh climates. Where the climate is milder, there man exerts less effort in his struggle with nature, and therefore man there is gentler and kindlier. In countries with a mild climate people are handsome, alert, easily excited, their speech is elegant, their movements graceful. Arts and science flourish there, their philosophy is not gloomy, their relations to women are full of fine courtesy. And so on and so on. . . . All this is fine, but

so unconvincing that you must allow me to go on burning wood in the fireplaces and building wooden barns.

KHROUSCHOV. Cut forests, when it is a matter of urgency, you may, but it is time to stop destroying them. Every Russian forest is cracking under the axe, millions of trees are perishing, the abodes of beasts and birds are being ravaged, rivers are becoming shallow and drying up, wonderful landscapes are disappearing without leaving a trace ; and all this because lazy man has not got the sense to stoop to pick up fuel from the ground. One must be a barbarian (*pointing to the trees*) to burn that beauty in the fireplace, to destroy what we cannot create. Understanding and creative power have been granted to man to multiply what has been given him, but hitherto he has not created, he has only destroyed. The forests grow less and less, the rivers dry up, wild birds disappear, the climate is spoilt, and every day the earth grows poorer and uglier. You look at me ironically, and all I am saying seems to you antiquated and not serious, but when I pass by woods belonging to the peasants, woods which I have saved from being cut down, or when I hear the rustling of the young forest, which I have planted with my own hands, I realize that the climate is to a certain extent also in my power ; and if a thousand years hence man is to be happy, I too shall have had a share in it. When I plant a little birch tree and then see how it is growing green and shaking in the wind, my

soul is filled with pride from the realization that, thanks to me, there is one more life added on earth . . .

FYODOR (*interrupting*). Your health, Wood Demon!

VOYNITSKY. All this is very fine, but if you looked at the matter, not from a novelette point of view, but from a scientific point of view, then . . .

SONYA. Uncle George, your tongue is covered with rust. Do keep quiet!

KHROUSCHOV. Indeed, George Petrovich, let's not discuss it. Please.

VOYNITSKY. As you like!

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. Ah!

SONYA. Grannie, what's the matter?

MARIE VASSILIEVNA (*to* SEREBRYAKOV). I had forgotten to tell you, Alexander. . . . I'm losing my memory. . . . I had a letter to-day from Kharkov, from Paul Alexeyevich. . . . He asks to be remembered to you. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. Thank you, I am very glad.

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. He sent me his new pamphlet and asked me to show it to you.

SEREBRYAKOV. Is it interesting?

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. It is interesting, but somewhat odd. He refutes what he himself was defending seven years ago. It is very, very typical of our time. Never have people betrayed their convictions with such levity as they do now. It is terrible!

VOYNITSKY. There's nothing terrible. Won't you have some fish, *maman*?

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. But I want to speak!

VOYNITSKY. We have been talking for the last fifty years about tendencies and schools; it's time we stopped.

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. It does not please you for some reason when I speak. Excuse me, George, but this last year you have changed so much that I can't make you out at all. You used to be a man of definite conviction, an enlightened personality . . .

VOYNITSKY. Oh, yes! I was an "enlightened personality" from which no one got the more light. Permit me to get up. I was an "enlightened personality." A more venomous joke couldn't have been uttered! Now I am forty-seven. Up till last year I was deliberately trying, like you, to fog my eyes with all sorts of abstractions and scholasticism, in order not to see real life; and I thought that I was doing the right thing. . . . But now, if only you knew, what a great fool I seem to myself for having so stupidly let slip the time when I might have had everything, everything which my old age denies me now!

SEREBRYAKOV. Look here! George, you seem to blame your former convictions for something . . .

SONYA. Enough, papa! It's dull!

SEREBRYAKOV. Look here! You, as it were, blame your former convictions for something. But it is not they, it's yourself who is at fault. You forgot that convictions without deeds are dead. You ought to have been at work.

VOYNITSKY. Work? Not every one is capable of being a writing *perpetuum mobile*.

SEREBRYAKOV. What do you mean to convey by this?

VOYNITSKY. Nothing. Let's stop the conversation. We aren't at home.

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. I am completely losing my memory. . . . I forgot to remind you, Alexander, to take your drops before lunch; I brought them with me, but forgot to remind you.

SEREBRYAKOV. You need not.

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. But you are ill, Alexander! You're very ill!

SEREBRYAKOV. Why make a fuss about it? Old, ill, old, ill . . . that's the only thing I hear! (*To* ZHELTOUKHIN.) Leonid Stepanovich, allow me to get up and to go into the house. It is rather hot here and the mosquitoes are biting.

ZHELTOUKHIN. Please do. We've finished lunch.

SEREBRYAKOV. Thank you (*going into the house;* MARIE VASSILIEVNA *following him*).

JULIE (*to her brother*). Go to the professor! It's awkward!

ZHELTOUKHIN (*to her*). Damn him! (*going out*).

DYADIN. Yulia Stepanovna, allow me to thank you from the bottom of my soul (*kissing her hand*).

JULIE. Don't mention it, Ilya Ilyich! You've eaten so little . . . (*the company getting up and thanking her*). Don't mention it! You've all eaten so little!

FYODOR. What are we going to do now? Let's now go to the croquet lawn and settle our bet . . . and then?

JULIE. And then we shall have dinner.

FYODOR. And then?

KHROUSCHOV. And then you all come to me. In the evening we'll arrange a fishing party on the lake.

FYODOR. Splendid!

DYADIN. That is fascinating!

SONYA. Well, it is settled then. It means we are going now to the croquet lawn to settle our bet. . . . Then Julie will give us an early dinner, and about seven we'll drive over to the Wood. . . . I mean to Mr. Khrouschov. Splendid! Come, Julie, let's get the balls (*going with* JULIE *into the house*).

FYODOR. Vassili, carry the wine to the lawn! We will drink the health of the conquerors. Now, pater, come and let's have a noble game.

ORLOVSKY. Wait a while, my own, I must sit with the professor for a few minutes, for it's a bit awkward. One must keep up appearances. You play my ball for a while, I'll come presently . . . (*going into the house*).

DYADIN. I am going to listen to the most learned Alexander Vladimirovich. In anticipation of the high delight, which . . .

VOYNITSKY. You're a bore, Waffle! Go away!

DYADIN. I am going (*going into the house*).

FYODOR (*walking into the garden, singing*). "Thou wilt be the queen of the universe, thou my dearest" . . . (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV. I'll leave quietly. (*To* VOYNITSKY). George Petrovich, I earnestly ask you, let us never talk either of forests, or of medi-

cine. I don't know why, but when you start discussing these matters, I have a feeling all day afterwards as if I had eaten my dinner out of rusty pots. Allow me! (*going out*).

[8]

ELENA ANDREYEVNA *and* VOYNITSKY.

VOYNITSKY. The narrow-minded fellow! Every one is permitted to say stupid things, but I dislike it when it is done with pathos.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. You have again behaved impossibly, George! Why need you have argued with Marie Vassilievna and Alexander, and spoken about *perpetuum mobile*? How petty it is!

VOYNITSKY. But if I hate him?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. There's nothing to hate Alexander for; he's like all the rest. . . .

(SONYA *and* JULIE *pass into the garden with balls and mallets for croquet.*)

VOYNITSKY. If you could see the expression on your face, your movements! . . . You're too lazy to live! Oh, what laziness!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Oh, lazy, boring! (*after a pause*). Every one scoffs at my husband before my eyes, without minding my presence. Every one looks at me with compassion: "Poor woman, she has an old husband!" All, even very kind people, would like me to leave Alexander. . . . That sympathy, all those compassionate glances and sighs of pity come simply to this. As the Wood Demon

has just said, all of you nonsensically destroy forests, and soon none will be left on the earth. Just as nonsensically do you all destroy man, and soon, thanks to you, there will remain on earth neither faithfulness, nor purity, nor the capacity for self-sacrifice. Why can't you look unconcernedly at a faithful wife, if she's not yours? The Wood Demon is right. There's lurking in all of you a demon of destruction. You spare neither forests, nor birds, nor women, nor one another.

VOYNITSKY. I don't love this philosophy!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Tell that Fyodor that his impudence bores men. It's loathsome in the end. To look into my eyes and to speak aloud in the presence of all about his love for a married woman,—how wonderfully witty!

(*Voices in the garden. Bravo! Bravo!*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. But how nice the Wood Demon is! . He often comes to us, but I'm shy and have never talked to him, as I should have liked to; I did not make a friend of him. He may think that I am ill-natured or proud. George, probably you and I are such good friends, because we both are dull and bore people! Bores! Don't look at me like that, I don't like it.

VOYNITSKY. But how else can I look at you, if I love you? You are my happiness, my life, my youth! . . . I know that the chances of your returning my love are *nil*, but I want nothing more, only allow me to look at you, to hear your voice. . . .

[9]

The same and SEREBRYAKOV.

SEREBRYAKOV (*in the window*). Elena dear, where are you ?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I'm here.

SEREBRYAKOV. Come and sit with us awhile, dear . . . (*disappearing*).

(ELENA ANDREYEVNA *goes into the house.*)

VOYNITSKY (*following her*). Allow me to speak of my love, don't drive me away, and this alone will be my greatest happiness.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT II

The dining-room of the SEREBRYAKOVS' *house. A sideboard, a dinner table in the middle of the room. Time: after one o'clock at night. From the garden comes the sound of the night watchman's knocks.*

[1]

SEREBRYAKOV (*sitting in a chair in front of the window and dozing*) *and* ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*sitting near by and also dozing*).

SEREBRYAKOV (*awaking*). Who's here! Is it you, Sonya?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. It's me. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. You, Lena dear! . . . The pain is excruciating!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Your rug is on the floor . . . (*wrapping it round his legs*). I'll shut the window, Alexander.

SEREBRYAKOV. No, don't, I'm hot. . . . I had just fallen into a doze and dreamed that my left leg did not belong to me. . . . I awoke with excruciating pain. No, it's not gout. I think it is rheumatism. What's the time now?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Twenty past one. (*A pause.*)

SEREBRYAKOV. Have a look in the morning, in the library, for Batyushkov. I believe we've got his collected articles.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. What?

SEREBRYAKOV. Have a look for Batyushkov in the morning. I remember seeing the volume here. But why am I breathing with such difficulty?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. You're tired. It's the second night now you haven't slept.

SEREBRYAKOV. They say that Turgenev's gout has developed into *angina pectoris*. I am afraid that this will happen in my case, too. Cursed, loathsome old age! Curse it! Since I've grown old I've become disgusting to myself. And to all of you I must present a disgusting spectacle.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. You speak of your old age in such a tone as if we all are to blame for your growing old.

SEREBRYAKOV. You are the first to be disgusted by me.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. How stupid of you! (*moving away and sitting down at some distance*).

SEREBRYAKOV. Of course, you're right. I'm not a fool and quite understand. You're young, healthy, handsome, you're eager for life; and I am an old man, almost a corpse. Well? Don't I realize it all? And, of course, it is foolish of me to be still alive. But wait a little while, I'll free you all soon.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Alexander, it's crushing me! If I deserve any reward for the sleepless nights, I ask only this from you: be quiet! For the love of Christ, be quiet! I ask for nothing else.

SEREBRYAKOV. It comes to this then, that, thanks to me, all of you have become crushed, and are bored and are wasting your youth; and I am the only one who is enjoying life and is content. Just so, of course!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Be quiet! You've worn me out!

SEREBRYAKOV. I have worn out every one. Of course!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*crying*). It's unbearable! Tell me what you want from me?

SEREBRYAKOV. Nothing.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Be quiet, then, I beg.

SEREBRYAKOV. Isn't it curious, if George or that old idiot Marie Vassilievna starts speaking, it seems all right; everybody listens to them. But if I say a single word, everybody begins to feel distressed. Even my voice is disgusting. Well, let us suppose I am disgusting, I am an egotist, I am a despot; but indeed haven't I, even in my old age, a certain right to egotism? Haven't I indeed deserved it? My life has been hard. I and Orlovsky were undergraduates together. Ask him. He had a good time and went about with gipsy women; he was my benefactor; and I at that time lived in a cheap, dirty room. I worked day and night, like an ox. I starved and worried because I lived at some one else's expense. Then I went to Heidelberg University, but I saw nothing of Heidelberg; I went to Paris, but I saw nothing of Paris,—all the time I sat within four walls and worked. And since I became professor, and all through my life, I have served science, as they say, with faith and truth, as I am still serving her. Indeed, for all this, I ask you, have I not the right to a peaceful old age, to some consideration from people?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Nobody disputes your right. (*The window is flapping in the wind.*) The wind is getting up; I'll shut the window (*shutting it*). It's going to rain presently. . . . Nobody disputes your rights. (*A pause. Outside the night watchman knocks and sings a song.*)

SEREBRYAKOV. To work all one's life long for science, to get accustomed to one's study, to one's audience, to respected colleagues, and then all of a sudden, without rhyme or reason, to find oneself in this sepulchre, to have to see stupid people, day in and day out to hear trivial conversations! I want to live, I love success, I love popularity, noise; but here I am—in exile. Every minute pining for the past, watching the successes of others, afraid of death! . . . I cannot! I haven't the strength! And here some people won't even forgive me my old age!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Wait a while, have patience: in five or six years' time I too shall be old.

(*Enter* SONYA.)

[2]

The same and SONYA.

SONYA. I wonder why the doctor has not come yet. I told Stepan that if the Zemstvo doctor was out, to drive over and fetch the Wood Demon.

SEREBRYAKOV. Of what use is your Wood Demon

to me? He understands as much about medicine as I do about astronomy.

SONYA. You don't want us to call in the whole medical faculty to treat your gout?

SEREBRYAKOV. I am not even going to talk to that crazy fellow.

SONYA. Just as you please (*sitting down*). I don't mind.

SEREBRYAKOV. What's the time now?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Not yet two.

SEREBRYAKOV. It's stifling here. . . . Sonya, give me the medicine on the table.

SONYA. Certainly (*handing him the medicine*).

SEREBRYAKOV (*irritably*). Ah, not this one. It's no use asking for anything!

SONYA. Please, don't be capricious! Some may like it, but pray spare me. I don't like it.

SEREBRYAKOV. That girl has an impossible character. Why are you cross?

SONYA. And why do you speak in such a mournful tone! Some one might think that you are actually unhappy. Yet there are very few people as happy as you are.

SEREBRYAKOV. Just so, of course! I am very, very happy.

SONYA. Certainly, you're happy. . . . And if you have gout, you know perfectly well that the attack will pass by the morning. Why grieve then? Why make a fuss?

(*Enter* VOYNITSKY *in a dressing gown, with a candle.*)

[3]

The same and VOYNITSKY.

VOYNITSKY. There's a storm coming on. (*A flash of lightning.*) I say! Elena and Sonya, go to bed; I'll take your place here.

SEREBRYAKOV (*frightened*). No, no, don't leave me with him! No, he'll talk my head off.

VOYNITSKY. But they need a rest! They've not slept for two nights.

SEREBRYAKOV. Let them go to bed, but you too must go away. Thank you. I implore you to go. In the name of our past friendship, don't refuse me. We will have a talk some other time.

VOYNITSKY. Our past friendship! . . . This, I must say, is news to me.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Be quiet, George!

SEREBRYAKOV. My dear, don't leave me with him! He'll talk my head off.

VOYNITSKY. It is getting ridiculous.

KHROUSCHOV'S voice (*behind the scene*). They're in the dining-room? Here? Please attend to my horse!

VOYNITSKY. The doctor has come.

(*Enter* KHROUSCHOV.)

[4]

The same and KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV. What weather! The rain ran after me, but I just managed to escape it. How do you do? (*greeting them*).

SEREBRYAKOV. I'm sorry we troubled you. I did not want it at all.

KHROUSCHOV. Never mind, it's perfectly all right! But what's the matter with you, Alexander Vladimirovich? Aren't we ashamed of being seedy? Oh, we mustn't! What's wrong?

SEREBRYAKOV. Why do doctors always speak to patients in a condescending tone?

KHROUSCHOV (*laughing*). Well, you shouldn't be so observant . . . (*in a gentle voice*). Won't you lie down on your bed? You aren't comfortable here. In bed you'll be warmer and more restful. Come . . . I will examine you there . . . and everything will be all right.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Do as the doctor says, Alexander. Do go.

KHROUSCHOV. If you find it hard to walk, we will move you there in your chair.

SEREBRYAKOV. I can manage. . . . I'll walk . . . (*getting up*). Only they should not have troubled you. (KHROUSCHOV *and* SONYA *supporting him under the arm.*) Besides, I don't very much believe in . . . pharmacy. Why are you supporting me? . . . I can walk by myself. (*Going out with* KHROUSCHOV *and* SONYA.)

[5]

ELENA ANDREYEVNA *and* VOYNITSKY.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I'm worn out by him. I can hardly stand.

VOYNITSKY. You're worn out by him, and I'm worn out by myself. I've not slept for three nights.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. There's something wrong about this house. Your mother hates everything, except her little books and the professor. The professor is irritable ; he doesn't trust me ; he's afraid of you. Sonya is cross with her father and does not speak to me ; you hate my husband and openly despise your mother ; my boring self, I too am irritated, and to-day I was twenty times on the point of crying. In a word, it's a war of all against all. What's the sense of that war, what for ?

VOYNITSKY. Don't let us philosophize !

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. There's something wrong about this house. You, George, are well educated, intelligent, and it seems that you ought to understand that the world perishes not because of murderers and thieves, but from hidden hatred, from hostility among good people, from all those petty squabbles, unseen by those who call our house a haven of intellectuals. Do help me to reconcile every one ! Alone I cannot do it !

VOYNITSKY. You first reconcile me to myself ! My dear ! . . . (*clinging to her hand*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. You must not ! (*withdrawing her hand*). Go away !

VOYNITSKY. The rain will pass presently, and everything in nature will be refreshed and breathe freely. I alone shall not be refreshed by the storm. Day and night I am haunted and oppressed by the idea that my life has

been wasted irretrievably. I have no past, it was all stupidly thrown away on trifles; and the present is terrible in its absurdity. Here's my life and love: what shall I do with them, what use can I make of them? My feelings are wasted, like a sunbeam that falls into a ditch, and I myself am wasted. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. When you speak to me of your love, I grow stupid and don't know what to say. Forgive me, I can't say anything to you (*making to go*). Good night!

VOYNITSKY (*barring her way*). If only you knew how I suffer from the thought that side by side with me in this house another life is being wasted—your own! What are you waiting for? What cursed philosophy stands in your way? Understand, the highest morality does not consist in putting fetters on your youth and in trying to suppress your thirst for life. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*looking fixedly at him*). George, you're drunk!

VOYNITSKY. Maybe, maybe! . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Is Fyodor Ivanovich stopping here with you?

VOYNITSKY. He's stopping the night with me. Maybe, maybe. . . . Anything may be!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. And you've been drinking together to-day? Why did you do it?

VOYNITSKY. At any rate, it resembles life. . . . Don't take it away from me, Elena!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Formerly you never used to drink, and you never talked so much, as you do now. Go to bed! You bore me. And

tell your Fyodor Ivanovich that if he does not cease worrying me I will take steps to stop him! Go!

VOYNITSKY (*clinging to her hand*). My dear! . . . Dearest!

(*Enter* KHROUSCHOV.)

[6]

The same and KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV. Elena Andreyevna, Alexander Vladimirovich is asking for you.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*tearing away her hand from* VOYNITSKY). In a moment! (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV (*to* VOYNITSKY). Nothing is sacred to you! You and the dear lady who has just gone out ought to remember that her husband was once the husband of your own sister, and that there is a young girl living under the same roof! The whole district is speaking of the affair. What a disgrace! (*going out to the patient*).

VOYNITSKY (*alone*). She's gone . . . (*after a pause*). Ten years ago I used to meet her at the house of my dead sister. She was seventeen then, and I thirty-seven. Why didn't I fall in love with her then and propose to her? It was all so possible! She would now be my wife. . . . Yes. . . . We two would now be awakened by the storm. Frightened of the thunder, she would cling to me, and I should keep her in my embrace and whisper: "Don't be afraid, I am here with you." Oh, wonder-

ful thoughts! How fine! I laugh even. . . . But, my God, my ideas are getting mixed. . . . Why am I old? Why does she not understand me? Her rhetoric, her lazy morality, her absurd lazy ideas of the world's ruin—all this is profoundly hateful to me . . . (*a pause*). Why am I so wrongly made? How much I envy that gay dog Fyodor, or that silly Wood Demon! They're direct, sincere, silly. . . . They're free from this cursed, poisonous irony. . . .

(*Enter* FYODOR IVANOVICH, *wrapped in a blanket.*)

[7]

VOYNITSKY *and* FYODOR IVANOVICH.

FYODOR (*in the doorway*). Are you by yourself? No ladies present? (*entering*). I was awakened by the storm. Glorious rain. What's the time?

VOYNITSKY. The time be damned!

FYODOR. I fancy I heard the voice of Elena Andreyevna.

VOYNITSKY. She was here just now.

FYODOR. Magnificent woman! (*examining the medicines on the table*). What's that? Peppermint lozenges? (*tasting*). Yes, a magnificent woman! . . . Is the professor ill, or what?

VOYNITSKY. He's ill.

FYODOR. I can't understand such an existence. They say that the ancient Greeks used to throw their weak and ailing children into the abyss from Mont Blanc. Such as he ought to be thrown down too!

VOYNITSKY (*irritably*). Not Mont Blanc, but the Tarpeian rock. What crass ignorance!

FYODOR. Well, if it's a rock, let it be a rock. . . . As if it damned well mattered! Why are you so gloomy now? Are you sorry for the professor, are you?

VOYNITSKY. Let me alone (*a pause*).

FYODOR. Or perhaps you are in love with Mme. Professor? Eh? Why, that's right. . . . Sigh for her. . . . Only listen: if in the rumours, which are circulating in the district, there's a hundreth part of truth, and if I find it out, then don't ask for mercy, I'll throw you down from the Tarpeian rock.

VOYNITSKY. She's my friend!

FYODOR. Already?

VOYNITSKY. What you do mean by "already"?

FYODOR. A woman can be a man's friend only on this condition: first she's his acquaintance, then his mistress, and only then his friend.

VOYNITSKY. What a coarse philosophy!

FYODOR. On which account let's have a drink. Come, I think I've still got a bottle of chartreuse. We'll drink. And when the dawn comes, we will drive over to my place. Agreed? (*seeing* SONYA *enter*). Oh, heavens, excuse my not having a tie on! (*runs out*).

[8]

VOYNITSKY *and* SONYA.

SONYA. And you, Uncle George, have been drinking champagne again with Fyodor and driving

about with him in a troika. The bright birds singing together! Well, Fyodor is a downright and born rake; but you, what makes you behave like that? At your time of life it does not at all become you.

VOYNITSKY. Time of life has nothing to do with it. If there's no real life, one lives by illusions. Anyhow, it's better than nothing.

SONYA. The hay hasn't been gathered in; Guerasim said to-day that the rain would rot it away; and you are busy with illusions (*frightened*). Uncle, there are tears in your eyes!

VOYNITSKY. Tears? Not a bit . . . nonsense! . . . You just looked at me as your dead mother used to look. My dear! . . . (*eagerly kissing her hands and face*). My sister . . . my sweet sister! . . . Where's she now? If she knew! Oh, if only she knew!

SONYA. What? If she knew what, Uncle?

VOYNITSKY. It is hard, bad . . . (*enter* KHROUSCHOV). No matter. . . . I'll tell you afterwards. . . . I'll go . . . (*going out*).

[9]

SONYA *and* KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV. Your father refuses to listen to anything. I tell him it's gout, and he says it's rheumatism; I ask him to lie down, and he sits up (*taking his hat*). Nerves!

SONYA. He's spoilt. Put away your hat. Wait till the rain stops. Won't you have something to eat?

KHROUSCHOV. I think I will.

SONYA. I love to have something to eat at night. I believe there must be something in the sideboard . . . (*rummaging there*). He does not need a doctor. What he needs is to have round him a dozen ladies gazing into his eyes and sighing, "Professor, Professor!" Here's some cheese. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. You ought not to speak of your father like that. I agree, he's a difficult person; but if you compare him with the others, all these Uncle Georges and Orlovskys aren't worth his little finger.

SONYA. Here's a bottle of something. . . . I'm not speaking of my father, but of the great man. I love my father, but I'm sick of great men with their Chinese ceremonies . . . (*they sit down*). What a downpour! (*a flash*). Oh!

KHROUSCHOV. The storm is passing away, it's only on the borders of the estate. . . .

SONYA (*pouring out*). Here you are!

KHROUSCHOV. May you live to be a hundred! (*drinking*).

SONYA. You are cross because we have troubled you in the night?

KHROUSCHOV. On the contrary. If you had not called me in, I should be sleeping now, and to see you in the flesh is much more pleasant than to see you in a dream.

SONYA. Why, then, do you look so cross?

KHROUSCHOV. Because I am cross. There's nobody about here, so I can speak frankly. With what pleasure, Sophie Alexandrovna, I

would carry you away from here this very minute. I can't breathe this air here, and it seems to me that it is poisoning you. Your father, completely absorbed in his gout and in his books, and refusing to take notice of anything else; that Uncle George; finally, your stepmother. . . .

SONYA. What about my stepmother?

KHROUSCHOV. One can't speak of everything . . . one can't! My dear, there's a great deal which I don't understand in people. In a human being everything should be beautiful: the face, the clothes, the soul, the thoughts. . . . Often I see a beautiful face and clothes, so beautiful that my head gets giddy with rapture; but as for the soul and thoughts, my God! In a beautiful outside there's sometimes hidden such a black soul that no whitening can rub it off. . . . Forgive me, I'm agitated. . . . Indeed, you are infinitely dear to me. . . .

SONYA (*dropping a knife*). I've dropped it. . . .

KHROUSCHOV (*picking it up*). That's all right . . . (*after a pause*). One happens sometimes to walk on a dark night in a forest, and when one sees a light gleaming far away in the distance, one's soul is filled with such joy that one cares nothing for the fatigue, for the darkness, or for the prickly branches stinging one's face. . . . I work from morning till late at night; winter and summer I know no rest, I fight with those who do not understand me, at times I suffer intolerably. . . . But at last I've found my little light. . . . I

shan't boast that I love you above all on earth. Love to me is not everything in life . . . love is my reward. My dear, my glorious, there is no higher reward to one who works, struggles, suffers. . . .

SONYA (*in agitation*). I'm sorry. . . . One question, Mikhail Lvovich!

KHROUSCHOV. What? Ask it quickly. . . .

SONYA. You see. . . . You often come to our house, and I sometimes go with my people to yours. Do own that you can't forgive yourself for it. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. What do you mean?

SONYA. I mean, I want to say that your democratic sentiment is offended by your being close friends with us. I have studied at the Institute, Elena Andreyevna is an aristocrat, we dress fashionably; and you are a democrat. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Why . . . why . . . let's not speak about that! It isn't the time!

SONYA. You yourself dig peat, plant trees . . . it's somewhat strange. . . . To be brief, in a word, you're a socialist. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Democrat, socialist! . . . Sophie Alexandrovna, how can you speak of it seriously and even with a tremble in your voice!

SONYA. Yes, yes, seriously, a thousand times seriously.

KHROUSCHOV. But you can't, you can't. . . .

SONYA. I assure you, I swear, that if, for instance, I had a sister and you fell in love with her and proposed to her, you would never forgive

it yourself, and you would be ashamed to show yourself to your Zemstvo men and women doctors. You would feel ashamed of having married an aristocratic girl, a "muslined young lady," who has never learnt to do any useful work, and who dresses fashionably. I know it quite well. . . . I see in your eyes that it's true! In a word, to be brief, these forests of yours, this peat of yours, your embroidered blouse—all this is an affectation, play-acting, a falsehood and nothing else!

KHROUSCHOV. Why? My child, why have you insulted me? . . . Yet, I am a fool. It serves me right. I shouldn't have intruded where I was not welcome! Good-bye (*going to the door*).

SONYA. Forgive me. . . . I was blunt, I apologize.

KHROUSCHOV (*returning*). If you knew how oppressive and stifling it is here! A set of persons who approach every one sideways, look at a man askance, and try to make him out a socialist, a psychopath, a phrase-monger, anything you like, save a human being. "Oh, he's a psycopath!" and they're satisfied. "He's a phrase-monger," and they're delighted as though they had discovered America. And when people don't understand me and don't know what label to stick on my forehead, they blame not themselves for this, but me, and say, "He's a queer fellow, odd!" You're not twenty yet, but you are already old and sober-minded, like your father and

Uncle George; and I shouldn't in the least be surprised if you were to call me in to cure you of gout. One can't live like that! Whoever I am, look straight into my eyes, candidly, without reservations, without programmes, and above all try to see me as a human being; otherwise in your relations to people there will never be any peace. Good-bye! And remember my words: with such cunning, suspicious eyes as yours, you will never love! . . .

SONYA. It is untrue!

KHROUSCHOV. It is true!

SONYA. It's untrue! Just to spite you . . . I do love you! I love, and it pains me, it pains me! Leave me alone! Go away, I implore . . . don't come to our house . . . don't come. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Allow me then! (*going out*).

SONYA (*alone*). He got angry. God forbid I should have a temper like his! (*After a pause.*) He speaks admirably, but who can guarantee that it is not phrase-mongering? He constantly thinks of forests, he plants trees. . . . It is all very well, but it is quite possible that all this is psychopathical . . . (*covering her face with her hands*). I cannot make out anything! (*crying*). He has studied medicine, and yet his deepest interests lie outside medicine. . . . It's all strange, strange. . . . Lord, help me to think it all out!

[10]

(*Enter* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.)

SONYA *and* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*opening the windows*). The storm's over! The air is so wonderfully fresh! (*after a pause*). Where's the Wood Demon?

SONYA. He's gone.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Sophie!

SONYA. Well?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. How long are you going to be cross with me? We've done no wrong to one another. Why be enemies? It's time we stopped. . . .

SONYA. I myself had wished . . . (*embracing her*). Dear!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Splendid! . . . (*both are agitated*).

SONYA. Has papa gone to bed?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. No, he's sitting in the drawing-room. . . . You and I don't speak to one another for a month on end—God knows why. It's time at last to stop it . . . (*looking at the table*). What's all this?

SONYA. The Wood Demon supped here.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. And there's wine, too. . . . Let's drink friendship.

SONYA. Yes, please.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. From the same glass . . . (*pouring out wine*). It's much better like that. From now on we say thou to one another. Thou!

SONYA. Thou! (*they drink and embrace*). I have

long wished to make peace, but I felt shy . . . (*crying*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Why are you crying then?

SONYA. For no reason, just so.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. You must not, you must not . . . (*crying*). You queer creature, I too have started crying! (*After a pause.*) You are cross with me because you seem to think that I married your father from calculation. If you believe me, I swear that I married him for love. It was the scholar and famous man in him by whom I was infatuated. My love was not real love, it was artificial; but indeed it seemed to me that it was real. I am not to blame. And you, from the very day of our marriage, have punished me with your cunning, suspicious eyes. . . .

SONYA. Come, peace, peace! Let us forget. This is the second time to-day that I've heard that I have cunning, suspicious eyes.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. One must not look at life so cunningly. It does not suit you at all. One must trust, otherwise life's impossible.

SONYA. "A frightened crow fears the bush." I had so often been disillusioned.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. In whom? Your father is a good, honest man, a worker. To-day you reproved him for being happy. If he indeed was happy—absorbed in his works, he did not notice his happiness. I have done no deliberate wrong either to your father or to you. Uncle George is a very nice, honest, but unhappy, dissatisfied man. . . . Whom, then, do you not trust? (*after a pause*).

SONYA. Tell me truly, as a friend . . . Are you happy?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. No.

SONYA. I knew it. One more question. Tell me frankly, would you like your husband to be young?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. What a little girl you are! Certainly, I should! (*laughing*). Well, ask some more questions—do ask. . . .

SONYA. Do you like the Wood Demon?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Yes, very much.

SONYA (*laughing*). I have a silly expression on my face . . . have I? He's gone, and I still seem to hear his voice, his steps, and as I look at the dark window I seem to see his face there. . . . Let me tell you everything. . . . But I can't speak aloud, I'm ashamed. Come to my room, I'll tell you there. Do I seem silly to you? Tell me. . . . He's a nice man?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Very, very nice. . . .

SONYA. His forests, peat—they seem strange to me. . . . I can't make it all out.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. But forests are not the point! My darling, you see, it is talent that matters! You know what talent is? Courage, a free spirit, soaring to the heights . . . he plants a little tree or digs up a hundredweight of peat—and already he visualizes what's to happen in a thousand years, he already dreams of the happiness of mankind. Such men as he are valuable, and should be loved. God bless you. You both are pure, courageous, honest. He's rather untamed, but

you are sensible, clear-headed. . . . You will complete one another splendidly . . . (*getting up*). And I, I am tiresome, I am an episodic character. . . . In my music, in my husband's house, and in all your love-makings—in everything I have only been an episodic character. Indeed, Sonya, if you come to think of it, I am, probably, very, very unhappy! (*pacing the room in agitation*). There's no happiness for me in this world! No! . . . Why do you laugh?

SONYA (*laughing and covering her face*). I am so happy! So very happy!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*wringing her hands*). Indeed, how unhappy I am!

SONYA. I am happy . . . happy.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I want music. . . . I should like to play now. . . .

SONYA. Do play (*embracing her*). I can't sleep. . . . Do play.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I will. Your father hasn't gone to bed. When he's not well, music irritates him. Go and ask him. If he does not object, I'll play . . . go and ask him.

SONYA. I shall be back in a moment (*going out*).

(*The* NIGHT WATCHMAN *knocks in the garden.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I haven't played for a long time. I shall play, and cry like a fool . . . (*going to the window*). Is it you knocking there, Yefim?

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE. Ye-s!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Stop knocking. The master is not well.

THE WATCHMAN'S VOICE. I'm going! (*whistling*). Nigger! Jack! Nigger! (*after a pause*).

SONYA (*returning*). No!

(*Curtain.*)

ACT III

The drawing-room of the SEREBRYAKOVS' *house. Three doors : one to the right, one to the left, and one in the middle. Time : afternoon. Behind the scene* ELENA ANDREYEVNA *is heard playing Lensky's aria, before the duel, from the opera "Evgueny Oneyguin."*

[I]

ORLOVSKY, VOYNITSKY *and* FYODOR IVANOVICH (*the latter dressed in Circassian attire with a busby in his hand*).

VOYNITSKY (*listening to the music*). It's Elena Andreyevna playing . . . my favourite aria . . . (*the music coming to an end*). Yes . . . it's a fine piece. . . . It seems never to have been so boring here as it is now. . . .

FYODOR. You've never tasted real boredom, my dear fellow. When I was a volunteer in Serbia, there I experienced the real thing! Hot, stuffy, dirty, head simply splitting after a drinking bout. . . . Once I remember sitting in a dirty little shed. . . . Captain Kashkinazi was there, too. . . . Every subject of conversation long exhausted, no place to go to, nothing to do, no desire to drink—just sickening, you see, sickening to the point of putting one's head in a noose! We sat, in a frenzy, gazing at one another. . . . He gazes at me, I at him; he at me, I at him. . . . We gaze and don't know why we're doing it. . . . An hour passes, you know, then another hour,

and still we keep on gazing. Suddenly he jumps up for no reason, draws his sabre and goes for me. . . . Hey presto! . . . I, of course, instantly draw my sabre—for he'll kill me!—and it started: chic-chac, chic-chac, chic-chac, . . . with the greatest difficulty we were at last separated. I got off all right, but to this very day Captain Kashkinazi walks about with a scar on his face. See how desperately bored one may get! . . .

ORLOVSKY. Yes, such things do happen.

(*Enter* SONYA.)

[2]

The same and SONYA.

SONYA (*aside*). I don't know what to do with myself! . . . (*walking and laughing*).

ORLOVSKY. Puss darling, where are you going? Do sit with us a while.

SONYA. Fedya, come here . . . (*taking* FYODOR *aside*). Come here. . . .

FYODOR. What do you want? Why such a radiant face?

SONYA. Give me your word that you will do what I ask you!

FYODOR. Well?

SONYA. Drive over to the . . . Wood Demon.

FYODOR. What for?

SONYA. Just so . . . just drive over to him . . . ask him why he has kept away so long . . . a fortnight now.

FYODOR. Blushing! Shame! Here, Sonya's in love!

ALL. Shame! Shame!

SONYA (*covering her face and running away*).

FYODOR. She's flitting about, like a shadow, from room to room, and doesn't know what to do with herself. She's in love with the Wood Demon.

ORLOVSKY. She's a glorious little girl. . . . I love her. I longed, Fyodor dear, that you should marry her, you won't easily find a better bride. But well, probably God wills it so. . . . And what a pleasure and delight mine would be! I should come over to you, you with your young wife, your family hearth, the samovar chirping away on the table. . . .

FYODOR. I'm unskilled in these matters. If the crazy notion of marriage ever came into my head, I should in any case marry Julie. She, at any rate, is little, and of all evils one should always choose the least. And then, too, she's a good housekeeper . . . (*clapping his forehead*). There's an idea!

ORLOVSKY. What is it?

FYODOR. Let's have champagne!

VOYNITSKY. It's too early, and also it's hot . . . you wait a while. . . .

ORLOVSKY (*admiringly*). My sonnie, my beauty! . . . He wants champagne, the dear soul! . . .

(*Enter* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.)

[3]

The same and ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*walking across the stage*).

VOYNITSKY. Look at her: she walks and sways from sheer indolence! Fine! Very fine!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Stop it, George! It's boring enough without your buzzing.

VOYNITSKY (*barring her way*). A talent, an artist! Well, do you look like an artist? Apathetic, indolent, sluggish. . . . So much virtue that, pardon me, it's even unpleasant to look at . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Don't look then . . . let me go. . . .

VOYNITSKY. Why are you pining away? (*in a lively tone*). My dear, my lovely one, be a good girl! There's mermaid's blood flowing in your veins, why not be a mermaid!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Let me alone!

VOYNITSKY. Let yourself go, if only once in your life, fall in love quickly up to your very eyes with a merman! . . .

FYODOR. And then flop headlong into the water with him and leave the Herr Professor and all of us waving our hands!

VOYNITSKY. Mermaid, eh? Love while you may!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. And why do you go on teaching me? As if I don't know, without your telling me, how I should live if I had my will! Like a care-free bird I should fly away, from all of you, from your sleepy faces, from your boring, wearisome conversations. I should forget your very existence in the world,

and no one would dare then teach me. But I haven't my own will. I'm cowardly, shy, and it seems to me all along that, if I were to be unfaithful, all wives would follow my example and leave their husbands; that God would punish me, and my conscience torment me; otherwise I would show you what a free life is like! (*going out*).

ORLOVSKY. Dear soul, the beauty! . . .

VOYNITSKY. I believe I'll soon begin to despise this woman! She's shy like a little girl, and philosophizes like an old deacon, adorned with virtues! Curdled milk!

ORLOVSKY. Stop, stop! . . . Where's the professor now?

VOYNITSKY. In his study. Writing away.

ORLOVSKY. He called me here by letter on some business. Do you happen to know what the business is?

VOYNITSKY. He can't have any business. He writes rubbish, grumbles and is jealous, that's all.

(ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE *enter by the door on the right.*)

[4]

The same, ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE.

ZHELTOUKHIN. How do you do, all! (*greeting them*).

JULIE. How do you do, godpa dear! (*kissing him*). How do you do, Fedya! (*kissing him*). How do you do, George Petrovich! (*kissing him*).

ZHELTOUKHIN. Alexander Vladimirovich is at home?

ORLOVSKY. Yes. He's in his study.

ZHELTOUKHIN. I must go to him. He wrote asking to see me on a matter of business . . . (*going out*).

JULIE. George Petrovich, did you receive the barley yesterday, for which you asked in your note?

VOYNITSKY. Thanks, I did. How much is it? We also had something from you in the spring. I don't remember what . . . we must settle our accounts. I can't bear messing up things and postponing settlements.

JULIE. In the spring you had eight quarters of corn, two heifers, a calf, and also butter for your farm hands.

VOYNITSKY. How much does it all come to?

JULIE. How can I say? I can't say straightaway without a counting-board, George Petrovich.

VOYNITSKY. I'll fetch you a counting-board, if you must have one. . . .

(*Goes out and returns with a counting-board.*)

ORLOVSKY. Duckie, is your brother quite well?

JULIE. Thank God he is. Godpa dear, where did you buy that nice tie?

ORLOVSKY. In town, at Kirpichov's.

JULIE. How pretty! I'll buy one like it for Lennie.

VOYNITSKY. Here's the counting-board.

JULIE (*sitting down and rapping the beads on the counting-board*).

ORLOVSKY. What a splendid manager God has

given Lennie! A wee thing, hardly visible from the ground, and see how she works away! See!

FYODOR. Yes, and he's only lounging about, pressing his cheek. Idler!

JULIE. Now, you have confused my reckoning.

VOYNITSKY. Come, let's go to some other room. Into the hall. It's so dull here . . . (*yawning*).

ORLOVSKY. Well, let's go into the hall. . . . I don't mind. . . .

(*They go out by the left door.*)

JULIE (*alone: after a pause*). Fedya dressed as a Circassian! . . . That's what happens when parents fail to give the right direction. There's no handsomer man in the whole district, clever, rich, and yet no earthly good. . . . Hopeless! . . . (*rapping on the counting-board*).

(*Enter* SONYA.)

[5]

JULIE *and* SONYA.

SONYA. You're here, Julie dear? I didn't know . . .

JULIE (*kissing her*). My dear!

SONYA. What are you doing? Counting? What an admirable manager you are—the mere sight of you makes me envious! Julie dear, why don't you marry?

JULIE. You see . . . One or two men have been suggested to me, but I have refused. A real suitor would not want to marry me! (*sighing*). No!

SONYA. But why?

JULIE. I am an uneducated girl. I was taken from the high school in my second year.

SONYA. But why did they take you away, Julie dear?

JULIE. For incapacity.

SONYA (*laughing*).

JULIE. Why do you laugh, Sonya?

SONYA. There's something queer going on in my head. . . . Julie dear, I am so happy today, so happy, that I feel even bored by my happiness. . . . I don't know what to do with myself. . . . Now let's talk of something, come. . . . Have you ever been in love?

JULIE (*affirmatively nodding her head*).

SONYA. Yes? Is he interesting?

JULIE (*whispering in her ear*).

SONYA. Who? Fyodor?

JULIE (*affirmatively nodding her head*). And you?

SONYA. I, too . . . only not with Fyodor (*laughing*). Go on, tell me more. . . .

JULIE. I have wanted to have a talk with you for a long time, Sonechka.

SONYA. Please, do.

JULIE. I want to make things clear. . . . You see . . . I've always been sincerely well disposed towards you. . . . I have many girl friends, but you are the very best of them all. If you were to say to me, Julie, give me ten horses, or, say, two hundred sheep, I would do it with pleasure. . . . To you I should grudge nothing. . . .

SONYA. Why are you blushing, Julie?

JULIE. I'm rather shy of . . . I . . . I am sin-

cerely well disposed towards you. Of them all you are the very best . . . not proud. . . . What a pretty print you are wearing!

SONYA. We'll talk of the print later. . . . Go on. . . .

JULIE (*getting up*). I don't know how it's done among clever people. . . . Allow me to propose to you. . . . Make me happy. . . . I mean . . . I mean . . . I mean . . . marry Lennie (*covering her face*).

SONYA (*getting up*). We'd better not talk about it, Julie dear. . . . No, we'd better not. . . .

(*Enter* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.)

[6]

The same and ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. There's simply no place to sit in. The two Orlovskys and George are lounging about all over the house, and whatever room I go to, they're there. It's simply exasperating. What do they want here? Why don't they go somewhere else?

JULIE (*through tears*). How do you do, Elena Andreyevna! (*making to kiss her*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. How you do do, Julie dear! Forgive me, I don't like continuous kissing. Sonya, what's your father doing? (*a pause*). Sonya, why don't you answer me? I ask you: what's your father doing? (*a pause*). Sonya, why don't you answer me?

SONYA. You want to know? Come here . . . (*taking her aside*). Well, I'll tell you. . . .

My heart feels too pure to-day to allow me to talk to you and go on dissembling. Here, take this! (*handing her a letter*). I found this in the garden. Julie, come, let's go! (*going out with* JULIE *by the left door*).

[7]

ELENA ANDREYEVNA, *and then* FYODOR IVANOVICH.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*alone*). What? A letter from George to me! But how am I to blame? Oh, how harsh and cruel of her! . . . Her heart feels so pure to-day that she can't talk to me. . . . My God, what an insult! My head is dizzy . . . I shall drop! . . .

FYODOR (*coming out by the left door and crossing the stage*). Why do you always start when you see me? (*a pause*). H'm! . . . (*taking the letter from her hands and tearing it to pieces*). You must stop all this. You must think of me only (*a pause*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. What does that mean?

FYODOR. It means that if I once pick out some one, it's no use her trying to escape from my hands.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. No, it only means that you are an impudent fool.

FYODOR. This evening at half-past seven you will be by the little bridge behind the garden and wait for me. . . . Well? . . . I've nothing more to say to you. . . . And so, my angel, until half-past seven! (*trying to take her arm*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*giving him a slap on the face*).

FYODOR. Forcibly expressed! . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Off you go!

FYODOR. At your service . . . (*walking away and returning*). I am touched. . . . Let's reason it out peacefully. . . . You see . . . I've experienced everything in this world; I have even drunk gold-fish soup once or twice. . . . But I've never yet gone up in a balloon, or ever once carried off learned professors' wives. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Go!

FYODOR. In a minute. . . . I've experienced everything. . . . And because of it, there's so much impudence in me that I simply don't know what to do with myself. I mean, I am saying all this to you with this object, that if you ever happen to need a friend or a faithful dog, just turn to me. . . . I am touched. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I want no dogs. . . . Go!

FYODOR. At your service (*with feeling*). Nevertheless and in spite of all, I am touched. . . . Certainly, I am touched. . . . Yes . . . (*irresolutely going out*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*alone*). My head aches. . . . Every night I dream bad dreams and have a presentiment of something terrible. . . . Yet how horrid! The young people were born here and grew up together, they "thou" one another, always kiss one another; they ought to live in peace and harmony; but soon, I think, they will all have devoured one another. . . . The forests are being saved by the Wood Demon, but there's no one to save human beings.

(*She goes to the left door, but on noticing* ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE *coming in by that door, she goes out by the middle door.*)

[8]

ZHELTOUKHIN *and* JULIE.

JULIE. How unlucky we are, you, Lennie, and I, ah, how unlucky!

ZHELTOUKHIN. But who authorized you to speak to her? You unasked match-maker, you minx! You've spoilt the whole business for me! She'll think that I can't speak for myself, and . . . how very common! I've told you a thousand times that the whole affair must be let alone. Nothing but humiliation and all these hints, vileness, meanness. . . . The old fellow must have guessed that I'm in love with her, and is already exploiting my feelings! He wants me to buy this estate from him.

JULIE. And how much does he ask for it?

ZHELTOUKHIN. Sh-sh! . . . They're coming. . . .

(*Enter by the left door :* SEREBRYAKOV, ORLOVSKY, *and* MARIE VASSILIEVNA*; the latter reading a pamphlet as she comes in.*)

[9]

The same, SEREBRYAKOV, ORLOVSKY, *and* MARIE VASSILIEVNA.

ORLOVSKY. I too, old boy, am not quite fit. The last two days my head and my whole body have been aching. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. Where are the others? I don't like this house. It is a labyrinth. Twenty-six huge rooms. They all disperse and you can never find anyone (*ringing*). Ask George Petrovich and Elena Andreyevna to come here.

ZHELTOUKHIN. Julie, you have nothing to do: go and find George and Elena Andreyevna.

(JULIE *goes out.*)

SEREBRYAKOV. One can reconcile oneself to one's ailments, however hard it may be, but what I can't stand is this present mood of mine. I have a feeling as though I were already dead, or had tumbled down from the earth on to a strange planet.

ORLOVSKY. It depends on how you look at it. . . .

MARIE VASSILIEVNA (*reading*). Give me a pencil. . . . There's a contradiction again! I must mark it.

ORLOVSKY. Here you are, Your Excellency! (*handing her a pencil and kissing her hand*).

(*Enter* VOYNITSKY.)

[10]

The same, VOYNITSKY, *and then* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

VOYNITSKY. You wanted me?

SEREBRYAKOV. Yes, George.

VOYNITSKY. What is it you want?

SEREBRYAKOV. Now . . . why are you cross? (*A pause.*) If I am in the wrong, excuse me, please. . . .

VOYNITSKY. Drop that tone. . . . Let's come to business. . . . What's it you want?

(*Enter* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.)

SEREBRYAKOV. Here's Lenochka, too. . . . Sit down, ladies and gentlemen (*a pause*). I have summoned you here, gentlemen, to announce that the Inspector-General is about to arrive. . . . But no more joking. It is a serious matter. I have invited you here, gentlemen, in order to ask your help and advice, and knowing your unfailing kindness, I hope you will grant me them. I am a scholar, a bookish man, and I have always been a stranger to practical life. Dispense with the advice of well-informed people I cannot, and I beg you, Ivan Ivanych, and you, Leonid Stepanych, and you, George. . . . The point of the matter is *manet omnes una nox*, that is, we are all in God's hands. I am old, ill, and therefore I consider it opportune to arrange my property relations in so far as they concern my family. My life is over, I'm not thinking of myself; but I have a young wife, and a young daughter. To continue living in the country is impossible for them.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. It's all the same to me.

SEREBRYAKOV. We are not made for the country. But to live in town on the income we receive from this estate is impossible. The day before yesterday I sold part of a wood for timber for four thousand roubles; but that is an extraordinary measure, of which one cannot avail oneself every year. Such measures have to

be taken as will guarantee us a constant, more or less fixed amount of income. I've thought out such a measure, and I have the honour to submit it to your consideration. Without entering into details, I will submit it in its general lines. Our estate yields us an average interest of two per cent. I propose to sell the estate. If we invest the money thus realized in interest-bearing securities, we shall get from four to five per cent. I think there might even be left a surplus of a few thousand roubles, which would allow us to buy a small bungalow in Finland. . . .

VOYNITSKY. Wait a moment, I fancy my hearing is playing me false. . . . Repeat what you've just said. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. To invest the money in interest-bearing securities and to buy a bungalow in Finland . . .

VOYNITSKY. Not Finland. . . . You said something else. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. I propose to sell the estate.

VOYNITSKY. Yes, that's it. . . . You'll sell the estate. . . . Admirable—a grand idea! . . . And what's to happen to me and mother?

SEREBRYAKOV. We will consider all this in its turn. . . . Not everything at once. . . .

VOYNITSKY. Wait a moment. . . . Evidently, up till now I had not a grain of common sense. Up till now I had the stupidity to think that the estate belonged to Sonya. My late father bought this estate and settled it on my sister. Up till now I was naïve, I understood the law in no Turkish fashion, and I thought

that the estate devolved from my sister to Sonya.

SEREBRYAKOV. Yes, the estate belongs to Sonya. Who disputes it? Without Sonya's consent I shan't undertake to sell it. Besides, I'm doing it for Sonya's benefit.

VOYNITSKY. Inconceivable! Inconceivable! Either I've gone out of my mind, or . . . or . . .

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. George, don't contradict the professor! He knows better than we do what's right and what's wrong.

VOYNITSKY. Give me some water . . . (*drinking*). Go on with it! Go on!

SEREBRYAKOV. I can't understand why you are so agitated, George! I don't say that my plan is ideal. If all of you find it unsound, I shan't insist.

(*Enter* DYADIN, *wearing a frock-coat, white gloves and a broad-brimmed top-hat.*)

[II]

The same and DYADIN.

DYADIN. I have the honour to salute you. I apologize for venturing to enter without being announced. I am guilty, but I claim your indulgence, as there was not a single domestic in the hall.

SEREBRYAKOV (*perplexed*). Glad to see you. . . . Come in. . . .

DYADIN (*bowing ceremoniously*). Your Excellency! Mesdames! My intrusion on your

domains has a double object. I've come, firstly, to pay a visit and to testify to my reverential respect; secondly, to invite you all to take advantage of this beautiful weather to make an expedition to my province. I dwell at the water mill, which I rent from our common friend the Wood Demon. It is a cosy, poetical corner of the earth, where in the night you can hear mermaids splashing, and in daytime . . .

VOYNITSKY. Wait a while, Waffle, we are talking business. . . . Wait a while! . . . (*To* SEREBRYAKOV.) Now ask him. . . . The estate was bought from his uncle.

SEREBRYAKOV. Oh, why should I ask him? What for?

VOYNITSKY. The estate was then bought for ninety-five thousand roubles. My father paid down only seventy thousand, with a debt on the estate of twenty-five thousand. Now listen. . . . The estate could not have been bought had not I renounced my share of the inheritance in favour of my sister, whom I loved. Moreover, I worked for ten years like an ox, and cleared off the whole debt.

SEREBRYAKOV. What do you wish then, my dear man?

VOYNITSKY. The estate is clear of debt and is in good order, thanks only to my personal exertions. And now, when I'm getting old, you want to bundle me out neck and crop!

SEREBRYAKOV. I can't understand what you're driving at!

VOYNITSKY. For twenty-five years I have man-

aged this estate. I have worked, and have sent you money regularly, like a most conscientious bailiff, and all those years you have never once even thanked me! All those years, when I was young, and even now, I have received from you an annual wage of five hundred roubles—a beggarly wage!—and it has never once occurred to you to increase it even by one rouble!

SEREBRYAKOV. George, how could I know? I'm not a practical man and understand nothing in such matters. You could have increased it as much as you liked!

VOYNITSKY. Why didn't I steal, is that it? Why don't you all despise me because I did not steal? That would be just, and now I should not be a pauper.

MARIE VASSILIEVNA (*sternly*). George!

DYADIN (*in agitation*). George dear, don't . . . don't. . . . I am trembling. . . . Why spoil friendly relations? (*Embracing him.*) Please don't! . . .

VOYNITSKY. For twenty-five years, like a mole, I have sat with her, with mother here, within these four walls. . . . All our thoughts and feelings have belonged to you alone. In daytime we spoke of you, of your works, we were proud of your fame, uttered your name with reverence; and the nights we spent in reading reviews and books, which I now profoundly despise!

DYADIN. Don't, Georgie dear, don't! . . . Please! . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. I don't understand what you want!

VOYNITSKY. You were to us a being of a higher order, and your articles we knew by heart. . . . But now my eyes are opened. I see everything! You write on art, but understand nothing about art! All your works, which I loved, aren't worth a brass farthing!

SEREBRYAKOV. Gentlemen! Why don't you restrain him? I'll leave the room!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. George, I demand that you keep silent! Do you hear?

VOYNITSKY. I shall not keep silent! (*Barring* SEREBRYAKOV'S *way.*) Wait, I've not finished yet! You have ruined my life! I have not lived! I have not lived! Thanks to you, I wasted, ruined the best years of my life! You're my worst enemy!

DYADIN. I can't bear it! . . . I can't! . . . I'll go into another room! . . . (*going out in violent agitation by the door on the right*).

SEREBRYAKOV. What do you want from me? And what right have you to talk to me in this tone? You nonentity! If the estate is yours, take it. I don't want it!

ZHELTOUKHIN (*aside*). Now the fat's in the fire! . . . I'll go! (*going out*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. If you say any more, I shall leave this hell this very minute! (*crying out*). I can't bear it any longer!

VOYNITSKY. A life wasted! I have talent, I'm intelligent, courageous. . . . If I had lived normally I might have been a Schopenhauer, a Dostoevsky. . . . My mind's wandering! I am going mad! . . . Mother, I am in despair! Mother!

MARIE VASSILIEVNA. Obey the professor!

VOYNITSKY. Mother! What shall I do? Oh, don't say a word! I know myself what I must do! (*To* SEREBRYAKOV.) You shall remember me! (*going out by the middle door;* MARIE VASSILIEVNA *following after him*).

SEREBRYAKOV. Gentlemen! What does all this signify? Rid me of that lunatic!

ORLOVSKY. He'll be all right, all right, Alexander; let his spirit calm down. Don't upset yourself so much.

SEREBRYAKOV. I won't live under the same roof with him! He lives here (*pointing to the middle door*), almost beside me. . . . Let him go and live in the village, or in one of the wings; otherwise I shall go away from here. Remain with him I will not. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*to her husband*). If anything like this happens again, I shall leave the house!

SEREBRYAKOV. Oh, don't frighten me, please!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I'm not frightening you, but all of you seem to have agreed to turn my life into hell. . . . I'll leave the house! . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. Every one knows quite well that you are young, and I am old, and that you're conferring a great favour by living here. . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Go on! . . . Go on! . . .

ORLOVSKY. Why, why, why! . . . My dear friends! . . .

(*Enter* KHROUSCHOV *hurriedly.*)

[12]

The same and KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV (*in agitation*). I'm very glad to find you in, Alexander Vladimirovich. . . . Excuse me for coming unseasonably and for being in your way. . . . But this isn't the point. How do you do!

SEREBRYAKOV. What is it you want?

KHROUSCHOV. Excuse me, I'm agitated . . . it's because I rode so quickly. . . . Alexander Vladimirovich, I hear that you have just sold your wood to Kirpichov for timber. If it is true, not mere gossip, then I beg you, don't do it.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Mikhail Lvovich, my husband isn't in the mood now to talk business. Won't you come with me into the garden?

KHROUSCHOV. But I must speak at once!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. As you please. . . . I can do no more. . . . (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV. Permit me to drive over to Kirpichov and tell him that you've changed your mind. . . . Yes? Will you allow me? To fell a thousand trees, to destroy them for the sake of two or three thousand roubles, for women's rags, whims, luxury. . . . To destroy them so that posterity should curse our savagery! If you, a scholar, a famous man, dare perpetrate such a cruelty, what may not others do who stand so much below you! How very terrible!

ORLOVSKY. Misha, talk about it later!

SEREBRYAKOV. Come, let's go, Ivan Ivanych; this will never end.

KHROUSCHOV (*barring* SEREBRYAKOV'S *way*). In that case, look here, professor. . . . In three months' time I shall have the money and buy it myself.

ORLOVSKY. Excuse me, Misha, this is rather strange. . . . Why, you, let us say, are a man of ideas . . . we thank you most humbly for it, we bow to you to the ground (*bowing*), but why such a rumpus!

KHROUSCHOV (*flaring up*). Universal, dear godpa! There are too many good-natured men on earth, and this always seemed suspicious to me! They're good-natured because they're indifferent!

ORLOVSKY. Why, you've come here to quarrel, my boy. It is not right! An idea is an idea, but, look here, old chap, this thing too is needed . . . (*pointing to the heart*). Without that thing, my dear fellow, all your forests and peats are not worth a brass farthing. . . . Don't take offence, but you're still green—ough! how very green!

SEREBRYAKOV (*sharply*). Next time, please don't trouble to come in unannounced, and please deliver me from your psychopathical pranks! You were all bent on trying my patience, and you've succeeded. . . . Please leave me alone! All these forests of yours, peats of yours, I consider mere delirium and psychopathy—there, you have my opinion! Come, Ivan Ivanych! (*going out*).

ORLOVSKY (*following after him*). Alexander my boy, that's too much! . . . Why be so harsh? (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV (*alone, after a pause*). Delirium, psychopathy! . . . According to the famous scholar and professor I am mad. . . . I bow to the authority of Your Excellency and I'm going home immediately to shave my head. . . . No! It is the earth, that still endures you, which is mad! (*going hurriedly towards the right door;* SONYA, *who has stood listening outside all through the last scene, coming in by the left door*).

[13]

KHROUSCHOV *and* SONYA.

SONYA (*running after him*). Stop! . . . I heard everything. . . . Speak! . . . Speak quickly . . . for I shan't bear it any longer and shall start speaking myself!

KHROUSCHOV. Sophie Alexandrovna, I have already said all I wanted to say. I implored your father to spare the wood. I was right, but he insulted me, and called me a madman. . . . I mad!

SONYA. Please, please! . . .

KHROUSCHOV. No, mad are not those who beneath their learning hide their cruel, stony heart, and pass off their soullessness for profound wisdom! Mad are not those who marry old men in order to deceive them openly, in order to obtain fashionable, elegant dresses on the money got from the felling of forests!

SONYA. Listen to me, listen! . . . (*grasping his hands*). Let me say . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Let us finish it. Let there be an

end. I am a stranger to you, I know already your opinion of yourself, and I've nothing more to do here. Good-bye. I am sorry that after our close friendship, which was so dear to me, I shall only retain the memory of your father's gout and of your arguments about my democratic sentiments. . . . But it is not I who am to blame for it. . . . No. . . .

SONYA (*crying, covering her face, and hurriedly walking out by the left door*).

KHROUSCHOV. I had the imprudence to fall in love here, it shall be a lesson to me! Out of this dungeon! (*going to the right door;* ELENA ANDREYEVNA *coming in by the left door*).

[14]

KHROUSCHOV *and* ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. You are here! One moment. . . . Ivan Ivanych has just told me that my husband was harsh with you. . . . You must forgive him, he's cross to-day and did not understand you. . . . As for myself, my soul is with you, Mikhail Lvovich! Believe in the sincerity of my respect, I sympathize with you, I am moved; and allow me with a pure heart to offer you my friendship! (*holding out both hands*).

KHROUSCHOV (*with aversion*). Get away from me! . . . I despise your friendship! (*going out*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*alone, groaning*). Why, why?

(*A shot is heard behind the scene.*)

[15]

ELENA ANDREYEVNA, MARIE VASSILIEVNA, *and then* SONYA, SEREBRYAKOV, ORLOVSKY, *and* ZHELTOUKHIN.

(MARIE VASSILIEVNA *comes out by the middle door, staggers, cries out and falls unconscious to the ground.*)

(SONYA *comes in and runs to the middle door.*)

SEREBRYAKOV
ORLOVSKY
ZHELTOUKHIN } What's the matter?

(SONYA *is heard crying out; she returns and cries:* "Uncle George has shot himself!" *She,* ORLOVSKY, SEREBRYAKOV *and* ZHELTOUKHIN *run out through the middle door.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*groaning*). Why, why?

(DYADIN *appears at the door on the right.*)

[16]

ELENA ANDREYEVNA, MARIE VASSILIEVNA, *and* DYADIN.

DYADIN (*in the doorway*). What's the matter?
ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*to him*). Take me away from here! Throw me into a deep pit, kill me, but I can't remain here any longer! Quick, I implore you!

(*Goes out with* DYADIN.)

(*Curtain.*)

ACT IV

The forest and the house by the mill which DYADIN *rents from* KHROUSCHOV.

[1]

ELENA ANDREYEVNA *and* DYADIN (*sitting on a bench under the window*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Ilya Ilyich dear, tomorrow you'll drive over again to the post office.

DYADIN. Most certainly.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I shall wait another three days. If I get no answer to my letter from my brother, I'll borrow some money from you and go to Moscow. I can't stay for ever at your mill.

DYADIN. Just so! . . . (*A pause.*) I dare not give you advice, my deeply respected lady, but all your letters, telegrams, and my daily journeys to the post office—all these, pardon me, are labours lost. Whatever answer your brother may send you, all the same you will go back to your husband.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I shan't go back. . . . One must be logical, Ilya Ilyich. I do not love my husband. The young people, of whom I was fond, were unjust to me all along. Why should I go back there? You will say—duty. . . . I too know this perfectly well, but, I say again, one must be logical . . . (*A pause.*)

DYADIN. Yes! . . . The greatest Russian poet

Lomonosov ran away from the Archangel province to find his fortune in Moscow. This was certainly noble of him. . . . But why did *you* run away? Your happiness, if we fairly consider the matter, is nowhere to be found. . . . It was appointed that the canary should sit in its cage and look on at the happiness of others; well, it must sit there all its life long.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Perhaps I'm not a canary, but a free sparrow!

DYADIN. O-oh! A bird is judged by its flight, my deeply respected lady. . . . During these last two weeks any other lady would have managed to be in ten towns, and would have thrown dust in everybody's eyes; but you have only ventured to run as far as the mill, and even this has worn your soul out. . . . No, no! You'll stay here a short time longer, your heart will get appeased, and you'll return to your husband. (*Listening.*) Some one's coming in a carriage (*getting up*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I'll go in.

DYADIN. I dare not trouble you any more with my presence. . . . I'll go to the mill to have a little nap. . . . I rose this morning before Aurora.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. After you've had your nap, come and we'll have tea together (*going into the house*).

DYADIN (*alone*). If I lived in an intellectual centre, they could draw a caricature of me for a magazine, with a very funny satirical inscrip-

tion. Gracious! I, at my time of life and with an unattractive appearance, to have carried off a famous professor's young wife! That is fascinating! (*going away*).

[2]

SEMYON (*carrying buckets*) *and* JULIE (*coming in*).

JULIE. Good day, Semyon! God assist you! Is Ilya Ilyich at home?

SEMYON. Yes. He's gone to the mill.

JULIE. Will you go and call him.

SEMYON. Yes. (*Going away.*)

JULIE (*alone*). He must be asleep! . . . (*Sitting down on the bench under the window and sighing deeply.*) Some sleep, others lounge about, and I all day long am running about, running about. . . . God won't end my life (*with a still deeper sigh*). Good God, that there can be such foolish people as that Waffle! As I drove by his barn a black little pig came out of the door. . . . It'll serve him right if the pigs tear the sacks which aren't his. . . .

(*Enter* DYADIN.)

[3]

JULIE *and* DYADIN.

DYADIN (*putting on his coat*). It is you, Yulia Stepanovna! Excuse my déshabillé. . . . I wanted to rest awhile in the embraces of Morpheus.

JULIE. How do you do!

DYADIN. Excuse me for not asking you in. . . . The rooms aren't tidied, etc. Perhaps you will come with me to the mill? . . .

JULIE. I shall be all right here. This is what I've come for, Ilya Ilyich. Lennie and the professor, to amuse themselves, wish to have a picnic here at the mill, to have tea. . . .

DYADIN. I'm delighted!

JULIE. I came in advance. . . . They'll be here presently. Please order a table to be brought out here, and of course the samovar. . . . Tell Semyon to get the provision baskets out of the carriage.

DYADIN. Certainly. (*A pause.*) Well? How are you all getting on?

JULIE. Badly, Ilya Ilyich. . . . Do you believe me, the whole bother has made me ill. You know, the professor and Sonechka are living with us now!

DYADIN. Yes, I know.

JULIE. After George laid hands on himself, they could not stay in the house. . . . They're afraid. In daytime they don't mind it so much, but when night falls, they all gather in one room and sit there until dawn. They are afraid of George's appearing in the darkness. . . .

DYADIN. Superstitions! . . . And do they mention Elena Andreyevna?

JULIE. Of course they do. (*A pause.*) Vanished!

DYADIN. Yes, it's a subject worthy of Aivasovsky's brush. . . . Just gone and vanished!

JULIE. And now nobody knows where she is. . . . Perhaps she has run away, or perhaps, in despair . . .

DYADIN. God is merciful, Yulia Stepanovna! All will be well.

(*Enter* KHROUSCHOV *with a portfolio and drawing-case.*)

[4]

The same and KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV. Hi! Is there anybody here? Semyon!

DYADIN. Have a look round.

KHROUSCHOV. Oh! . . . How do you do, Julie!

JULIE. How do you do, Mikhail Lvovich!

KHROUSCHOV. I've come again to you, Ilya Ilyich, to work here. I can't sit at home. Tell them to place my table under this tree, as they did yesterday, and to have two lamps ready. It'll soon be dark. . . .

DYADIN. At your service, your worship (*going out*).

KHROUSCHOV. How are you getting on, Julie?

JULIE. So so . . . (*A pause.*)

KHROUSCHOV. The Serebryakovs are staying with you?

JULIE. Yes.

KHROUSCHOV. H'm! . . . And what's your Lennie doing?

JULIE. He sits at home. . . . All the time with Sonechka. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Of course! (*A pause.*) Why doesn't he marry her?

JULIE. Well? (*A sigh.*) God bless him! He's well educated, a nobleman; she, too, is of a good family. . . . I have always wished it for her. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. She's a fool! . . .

JULIE. Now, you mustn't say so.

KHROUSCHOV. And your Lennie is a bright one, too. All your people are a picked lot! A palace of wisdom!

JULIE. Probably you've had no lunch to-day.

KHROUSCHOV. What makes you think so?

JULIE. You're so very cross.

(*Enter* DYADIN *and* SEMYON; *both carrying a table.*)

[5]

The same, DYADIN *and* SEMYON.

DYADIN. You've an eye, Misha, for the right place. You've chosen an exquisite spot to work in. It's an oasis! A pure oasis! Imagine that you are surrounded with palm trees, Julie here—a gentle hind, you—a lion, I—a tiger! . . .

KHROUSCHOV. You're a good fellow, a gentle soul, Ilya Ilyich, but your manners! Treacly words, shuffling feet, squared shoulders! . . . If a stranger were to see you, he'd think that you aren't a man, but the devil knows what! . . . It is annoying! . . .

DYADIN. I think this must be my destiny. . . . Fatal predestination.

KHROUSCHOV. At it again . . . fatal predestination! Stop it all (*fixing a chart on the table*). I'm going to stay the night with you here.

DYADIN. I'm extremely glad. . . . Now, Misha, you are cross, while in my soul there's inexpressible joy! As though a bird was sitting in my heart and singing a song.

KHROUSCHOV. Rejoice then. (*A pause.*) There's a bird in your heart, but there's a frog in mine. Twenty thousand scandals! Shimansky has sold his forest for timber. That's one! Elena Andreyevna has run away from her husband, and nobody knows now where she is. That's two! I feel that every day I'm getting more foolish, petty and stupid. . . . That's three! Yesterday I meant to tell you, but I lacked the courage. You may congratulate me. George left a diary. That diary got first into Orlovsky's hands; I went over and have read it a dozen times. . . .

JULIE. Our people have also read it.

KHROUSCHOV. George's affair with Elena Andreyevna, with which the whole district rang, turns out to be an abominable, dirty slander. . . . I believed that slander and slandered along with the rest; I hated, despised, insulted. . . .

DYADIN. That's certainly wrong.

KHROUSCHOV. The first person whose word I took was your brother, Julie dear. Yes, I too am a fine fellow! I believed your brother,

whom I don't respect; and disbelieved the woman, who before my very eyes was sacrificing herself. I more readily believe evil than good, and see no further than my nose. And this means that I am as stupid as the rest.

DYADIN (*to* JULIE). Come, let's go to the mill, my dear. Let the cross baby work here, and we will go for a walk. . . . Work away, Misha, old chap! (*going out with* JULIE).

KHROUSCHOV (*alone; mixing the colours in a saucer*). One night I saw him leaning his face against her hand. In his diary, that night is described in full; he tells how I came there, what I said to him. He quotes my words and calls me a fool and narrow-minded (*a pause*) . . . It's too thick! . . . It should be thinner. . . . And then he blames Sonya for having fallen in love with me. . . . She never loved me. . . . Now, there's a blot . . . (*rubbing the paper with a knife*). If even I admit that there's some truth in it, yet I must not think of it. . . . It began foolishly, and ended foolishly. . . . (SEMYON *and the labourers bringing in a large table.*) What's it? What's it for?

SEMYON. Ilya Ilyich told us to bring it in. Company is coming from the Zheltoukhin estate to have tea here.

KHROUSCHOV. All right. No work for me now. . . . I'll pack up my things and go home.

(*Enter* ZHELTOUKHIN *with* SONYA *on his arm.*)

[6]

KHROUSCHOV, ZHELTOUKHIN, *and* SONYA.

ZHELTOUKHIN (*singing*). "Unwillingly to these shores am I drawn by an unknown power." . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Who's there? Eh? (*hastily packing his case of instruments*).

ZHELTOUKHIN. One more question, dear Sophie. . . . Do you remember that day you lunched at our house, my birthday? Do own that you laughed then at my appearance.

SONYA. Leonid Stepanych, how can you say such a thing? I laughed for no reason.

ZHELTOUKHIN (*having noticed* KHROUSCHOV). Oh, you too are here! How do you do!

KHROUSCHOV. How do you do!

ZHELTOUKHIN. You're working away! Splendid! . . . Where's Waffle?

KHROUSCHOV. There. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN. Where's there?

KHROUSCHOV. I think I speak quite clearly. . . . There, at the mill.

ZHELTOUKHIN. I'd better ask him to come here (*walking away and whistling*). "Unwillingly to these shores . . ." (*going out*).

SONYA. How do you do! . . .

KHROUSCHOV. How do you do!

SONYA. What are you drawing?

KHROUSCHOV. Oh! . . . nothing interesting.

SONYA. Is it a plan?

KHROUSCHOV. No, it's a map showing the forests of our district. I've mapped them out (*after a pause*). The green colour indicates the

places where there were forests during the time of our grandfathers and before them; the bright green—where forests have been cut down during the last twenty-five years; and the blue—where there are forests still left intact. . . . Yes . . . (*A pause.*) Well, and how are you? Are you happy?

SONYA. This is not the time, Mikhail Lvovich, to think of happiness.

KHROUSCHOV. What else is there to think of?

SONYA. Our sorrow came only because we thought too much of happiness. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. So! (*after a pause*).

SONYA. There's no evil without some good in it. Sorrow has taught me this, that one must forget about one's own happiness and think only of the happiness of others. One's whole life should consist of sacrifices. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Yes . . . (*after a pause*). Marie Vassilievna's son shot himself, and she goes on searching for contradictions in her little books. A great misfortune befell yourself, and you're pampering your self-love: you are trying to distort your life and you think this a sacrifice. . . . No one has a heart. . . . Neither you nor I. . . . Quite the wrong things are being done, and everything goes to waste. . . . I'll go away presently and won't be in your and Zheltoukhin's way. . . . Why are you crying? I did not at all mean to make you cry.

SONYA. Never mind, never mind . . . (*wiping away her tears*).

(*Enter* JULIE, DYADIN, *and* ZHELTOUKHIN.)

[7]

The same, JULIE, DYADIN, ZHELTOUKHIN, *and then* SEREBRYAKOV *and* ORLOVSKY.

SEREBRYAKOV'S VOICE. Hallo! Where are you all?

SONYA (*crying out*). We're here, papa!

DYADIN. They're bringing the samovar! That is fascinating! (*he and* JULIE *arranging things on the table*).

(*Enter* SEREBRYAKOV *and* ORLOVSKY.)

SONYA. Here, papa!

SEREBRYAKOV. I see, I see! . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN (*aloud*). Gentlemen, I declare the sitting open! Waffle, uncork the liqueur.

KHROUSCHOV (*to* SEREBRYAKOV). Professor, let us forget what has occurred between us! (*holding out his hand*). I beg you to forgive me. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. I thank you. I am very glad. You too must forgive me. When the next day after that incident I tried to think over all that had taken place and recalled our conversation, I felt very upset. . . . Let us be friends (*taking his arm and going to the table*).

ORLOVSKY. You should have done this long ago, dear soul. A bad peace is better than a good quarrel.

DYADIN. Your Excellency, I am delighted that it pleased you to honour my oasis. Inexpressibly delighted!

SEREBRYAKOV. Thank you, my dear sir. Indeed, it is a fine place. A real oasis!

ORLOVSKY. And do you, Alexander, love nature?

SEREBRYAKOV. Very much. (*A pause.*) Gentlemen, let us not keep silent, let us talk. In our position that is the best thing to do. One must look misfortune straight and boldly in the face. I am more cheerful than all of you, and for this reason, that I am the most unhappy.

JULIE. I shan't add any sugar; have your tea with jam.

DYADIN (*bustling about among the company*). How glad, how very glad I am!

SEREBRYAKOV. Latterly, Mikhail Lvovich, I have gone through such a great deal and thought over things so much that I believe I could write a treatise, for the edification of posterity, on how to live. Live an age and learn an age, but it is misfortunes that teach us.

DYADIN. He who remembers the evil past, should lose an eye. God is merciful; all will end well.

SONYA (*starting*).

ZHELTOUKHIN. What made you start?

SONYA. I heard a cry.

DYADIN. It's the peasants on the river catching crayfish. (*Pause.*)

ZHELTOUKHIN. Didn't we agree to spend the evening as if nothing had happened? . . . And yet . . . there's some kind of tension. . . .

DYADIN. Your Excellency, I cherish towards science feelings not only of reverence, but even of blood relationship. My brother's wife's brother, you may perhaps have heard his name—Konstantin Gavrilych Novossyolov—was a Master of Foreign Literature.

SEREBRYAKOV. I didn't know him personally, but I know the name. (*A pause.*)

JULIE. To-morrow it will be exactly fifteen days since George died.

KHROUSCHOV. Julie dear, don't let us talk about it.

SEREBRYAKOV. Courage! Courage! (*A pause.*)

ZHELTOUKHIN. There is still some kind of tension. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. Nature abhors a vacuum. She has deprived me of two intimate relations and, in order to fill up the gap, she has soon given me new friends. I drink your health, Leonid Stepanovich!

ZHELTOUKHIN. I thank you, dear Alexander Vladimirovich! Allow me in my turn to drink to your fruitful scientific activity.

"Sow the seeds of wisdom, of goodness, of eternity!

"Sow the seeds! The Russian folk will give you their hearty gratitude!"

SEREBRYAKOV. I value the compliment you pay me. I wish from my heart that the time may soon come when our friendly relations shall have grown into more intimate ones.

(*Enter* FYODOR.)

[8]

The same and FYODOR.

FYODOR. That's where you are! A picnic!

ORLOVSKY. My sonnie . . . my beauty!

FYODOR. How do you do! (*embracing* SONYA *and* JULIE).

ORLOVSKY. I've not seen you for a fortnight. Where have you been? What have you seen?

FYODOR. I just drove over to Lennie's; there I was told that you were here; and I came here.

ORLOVSKY. Where have you been wandering?

FYODOR. Three nights without sleep. . . . Yesterday, dad, I lost five thousand at cards. I drank, played cards, went to town five times. . . . Fairly crazy!

ORLOVSKY. That's a brave fellow. You must be a little drunk still!

FYODOR. Not a bit. Julie, tea, please! Only with lemon, as sour as you like. . . . And George, eh! Without rhyme or reason to put a bullet in his head! And with a French revolver, too! As if he couldn't have got an honest English one!

KHROUSCHOV. Hold your tongue, you beast!

FYODOR. Beast, but a pedigree one! (*stroking his beard*). The beard alone, what isn't it worth! . . . Here I am, a beast, and a fool, and a knave, yet I have only to will—and the finest girl would marry me. Sonya, marry me! (*To* KHROUSCHOV.) Oh, I'm so sorry. . . . Pardon! . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Stop playing the fool.

JULIE. You're a lost soul, Fedenka! In the whole district there is no such drunkard and spendthrift, as you. The mere sight of you is heartbreaking. You are a caution!

FYODOR. Now you've started whining! Come here, sit beside me. . . . That's right. I'll

come and stay with you for a fortnight. . . . I must have a rest (*kissing her*).

JULIE. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. You should be a comfort to your father in his old age, but you only disgrace him. Yours is a stupid life and nothing else.

FYODOR. I am giving up drink! Basta! (*pouring out some liqueur*).

JULIE. Don't drink then, don't drink!

FYODOR. One glass I may (*drinking*). Wood Demon, I make you a present of a pair of horses and a gun. I'm going to stay at Julie's. . . . I'll stay there about a fortnight.

KHROUSCHOV. It would do you more good to be sent to a disciplinary battalion.

JULIE. Drink, drink some tea!

DYADIN. Have some rusks, old chap.

ORLOVSKY (*to* SEREBRYAKOV). Up to the age of forty, Alexander old boy, I led the same life as my Fyodor here. One day, my dear soul, I began counting how many women I had made unhappy in my life. I counted, counted, arrived at seventy, and gave it up. Well, as soon as I reached the age of forty, suddenly, Alexander old boy, something came over me. Sick at heart, I could find no peace; in a word, my soul at odds with itself, and there I was. I tried all sorts of things,—I read books, worked, travelled—all of no avail. Once, my dear soul, I went to pay a visit to my late friend, the Most Serene Dmitri Pavlovich. We sat down to lunch. After lunch, so as not to sleep, we started shooting at a target in the courtyard. There were

numbers and numbers of people present. And our Waffle was there, too.

DYADIN. I was there, yes . . . I remember. . . .

ORLOVSKY. Lord, my anguish then! . . . I could endure it no longer. Suddenly tears gushed from my eyes, I staggered, and suddenly cried out at the top of my voice across the whole yard with all my power: "My friends, my good people, forgive me, for the love of Christ!" And that very moment I felt my heart to have become pure, gentle, warm; and since that time, my dear soul, there is no happier man than I in the whole district. You too ought to do the same.

SEREBRYAKOV. What!

(*A glow appears in the sky.*)

ORLOVSKY. To do just as I did. To capitulate. To surrender.

SEREBRYAKOV. That's an example of our native philosophy. You advise me to ask forgiveness. For what? Let others ask forgiveness of me!

SONYA. Papa, but it is *we* who are to blame!

SEREBRYAKOV. Yes? Gentlemen, evidently at the present moment you all have in view my attitude towards my wife. Am I, in your opinion, am I to blame? It is ridiculous even. She has violated her duty, she left me at a difficult moment in life. . . .

KHROUSCHOV. Alexander Vladimirovich, please listen to me. . . . For twenty-five years you have been a professor and served science; I plant forests and practise medicine—but for

what purpose and for whom is it all, if we do not spare those for whom we are working? We say that we are serving humanity, and at the same time we are inhumanly destroying one another. For instance, did you or I do anything to save George? Where's your wife, whom every one of us insulted? Where's your peace, where's your daughter's peace? All is ruined, destroyed, all is going to waste. All of you call me Wood Demon, but not in me alone, in all of you sits a demon, all of you wander in a dark forest and grope your way. Of understanding, knowledge and heart we have just enough to spoil our own and other people's lives. . . .

(ELENA ANDREYEVNA *comes out of the house and sits down on the bench under the window.*)

[9]

The same and ELENA ANDREYEVNA.

KHROUSCHOV. I considered myself a man of ideas, a humane man, and at the same time I did not forgive people their slightest mistakes. I believed slanders, I gossiped along with others; and when, for instance, your wife trustfully offered me her friendship, I fired off at her from the height of my loftiness: "Get away from me! I despise your friendship!" That's what I am like. There sits a demon in me, I am petty, without talent, blind; but you, professor, too, are no eagle! And yet the whole district, all the women see in

me a hero, an advanced man, and you are famous all over Russia. And if such as I are seriously taken as heroes, and if such as you are seriously famous, it means only that for lack of better men Jack is a nobleman, that there are no real heroes, no talents, no men who might lead us out of this dark forest, who might repair what we are spoiling; that there are no real eagles who might by right enjoy honourable fame. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. Sorry! . . . I came here not in order to carry on a polemic with you and to defend my title to fame. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN. Now, Misha, let's stop this talk.

KHROUSCHOV. I'll finish presently and leave you. Yes, I am petty, but, professor, you too are no eagle. Petty was George who could not devise anything cleverer than to put a bullet in his head. All are petty! And as to the women . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*interrupting*). As to the women, neither are they any bigger (*advancing towards the table*). Elena Andreyevna left her husband, and do you think she will turn her freedom to any good use? Don't worry. . . . She will come back . . . (*sitting down at the table*). She has already come back. . . .

(*General consternation.*)

DYADIN (*laughing aloud*). That is fascinating! Suspend sentence, gentlemen, and let me say a word. Your Excellency, it is I who carried

off your wife, as once upon a time a certain Paris carried off the Fair Helen. I! Although there are no pock-marked Parises, yet there are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy!

KHROUSCHOV. I can't make it out. . . . It is you, Elena Andreyevna?

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. The last fortnight I've stayed here with Ilya Ilyich. . . . Why do you all look at me so? Well, how do you do! . . . I sat by the window and heard everything (*embracing* SONYA). Let's be friends! How are you, my dear girl? . . . Peace and goodwill!

DYADIN (*rubbing his hands*). That is fascinating!

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*to* KHROUSCHOV). Mikhail Lvovich! (*holding out her hand*). He who remembers the evil past, should lose an eye. How do you do, Fyodor Ivanych! . . . Julie dear! . . .

ORLOVSKY. Darling, our glorious Mrs. Professor, our beauty . . . she has come back, she has returned again to us! . . .

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I missed you all so much. How do you do, Alexander! (*holding out her hand to her husband; the latter turning his face away.*) Alexander!

SEREBRYAKOV. You have violated your duty.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. Alexander!

SEREBRYAKOV. I shan't deny I am very glad to see you and am ready to talk to you, but not here, at home . . . (*moving away from the table*).

ORLOVSKY. Alexander! (*A pause.*)

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. So! . . . It means, Alexander, our problem is solved quite plainly: in no way at all. Well, so it must be! I am an episodic character, mine is a canary's happiness, a woman's happiness. . . . To stick all my life long at home, to eat, to drink, to sleep, and to hear every day talk of your gout, of your rights, of your merits. . . . Why have you all dropped your heads, as if ashamed? Let's drink the liqueur—let us. Come!

DYADIN. Everything will turn out well, and get better; everything will be right and safe.

FYODOR (*coming up to* SEREBRYAKOV, *in agitation*). Alexander Vladimirovich, I am touched. . . . I pray you, be kind to her, show your wife some tenderness, say one kind word to her, and on the word of an honourable man, all my life long I will be your true friend, I'll make you a present of my best troika.

SEREBRYAKOV. Thank you, but excuse me, I don't understand you. . . .

FYODOR. H'm! . . . you don't understand! . . . Once I was coming back from the hunt and saw a tawny owl sitting on a tree. . . . I bang a pellet at him! He sits. . . . I bang at him a number nine . . . he sits. . . . Nothing moves him. He sits and only flaps his eyes.

SEREBRYAKOV. What does this refer to?

FYODOR. To the tawny owl (*returning to the table*).

ORLOVSKY (*listening*). I say, friends . . . quiet

. . . I think the church bells are ringing a fire alarm somewhere.

FYODOR (*noticing the glow*). O-o-oh! Look at the sky! What a glow!

ORLOVSKY. Dear souls, and we're sitting here and missing it all!

DYADIN. Grand!

FYODOR. O-oh! What an illumination! It must be near Alexeyevsk.

KHROUSCHOV. No, Alexeyevsk is more to the right. . . . It must be Novo-Petrovsk.

JULIE. How terrible! I'm afraid of a fire.

KHROUSCHOV. It's Novo-Petrovsk for certain.

DYADIN (*shouting*). Semyon, run to the dyke and have a look where the fire is. You might see it from there!

SEMYON (*shouting*). It is the Telibeyev forest burning.

DYADIN. What?

SEMYON. The Telibeyev forest!

DYADIN. Forest! . . . (*A long pause.*)

KHROUSCHOV. I must go there . . . to the fire. . . . Good-bye! . . . Forgive me, I was harsh, it is because I never felt so depressed as to-day. My soul is in anguish. . . . But all this is no matter. . . . One must be a man and stand firmly on one's feet. I shall not shoot myself, nor throw myself under the wheels of the mill. . . . I may not be a hero, but I will become one! I will grow the wings of an eagle, and neither this glow nor the devil himself shall frighten me! Let forests burn—I will plant new ones! Let me not be loved by one, I will love another! (*rushing off*).

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. What a splendid man!

ORLOVSKY. Yes. . . . "Let me not be loved by one, I will love another." How is this to be understood?

SONYA. Take me away from here . . . I want to go home. . . .

SEREBRYAKOV. Yes, it's time to go. It's dreadfully damp here. My rug and overcoat are somewhere about. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN. The rug is in the carriage, and here's the overcoat (*handing it to him*).

SONYA (*in violent agitation*). Take me away from here. . . . Take me away. . . .

ZHELTOUKHIN. At your service. . . .

SONYA. No, I will go with godpa. Take me with you, godpa! . . .

ORLOVSKY. Certainly, my dear soul, come with me (*handing her her things*).

ZHELTOUKHIN (*aside*). Curse it! . . . Nothing but humiliation and meanness!

(FYODOR *and* JULIE *pack the tea things and serviettes into the basket.*)

SEREBRYAKOV. The heel of my left foot is aching. . . . It must be rheumatism. . . . Again I shan't sleep all night.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA (*buttoning up her husband's coat*). Ilya Ilyich dear, please fetch my hat and cloak from the house!

DYADIN. I will! (*going into the house and coming back with her hat and cloak*).

ORLOVSKY. You are frightened of the glow, my dear! Don't be afraid, it's growing smaller. The fire is being put out. . . .

JULIE. There's half a jar of medlar jam left. . . . Well, let Ilya Ilyich have it. . . . (*To her brother.*) Lennie dear, take the basket.

ELENA ANDREYEVNA. I'm ready! . . . (*To her husband.*) Well, take me, you statue of the commander, and go to blazes with me in your twenty-six dismal rooms! That's all I'm good for!

SEREBRYAKOV. Statue of the commander! . . . I should laugh at this simile, but the pain in my foot prevents me! . . . (*To the whole company.*) Good-bye, friends! I thank you for the entertainment and for your pleasant company. . . . A superb evening, splendid tea —everything perfect; but, excuse me, there's one thing I can't approve of here—your native philosophy and views on life. One must work, gentlemen! Your way is impossible! One must do things. . . . Yes, one must work. . . . Good-bye! (*walking off with his wife*).

FYODOR. Come, Julie! (*To his father.*) Good-bye, pater! (*walking off with* JULIE).

ZHELTOUKHIN (*with the basket, following them*). A heavy basket, damn it . . . I can't stand these picnics. . . . (*Shouting behind the scene to his coachman.*) Alexey, drive up!

[10]

ORLOVSKY, SONYA, *and* DYADIN.

ORLOVSKY (*to* SONYA). Well, why are you sitting down? Come, my duckie! . . . (*going out with* SONYA).

DYADIN (*aside*). No one said good-bye to me! . . . That is fascinating! (*putting out the candles*).

ORLOVSKY (*to* SONYA). What's the matter?

SONYA. I can't go away, dear godpa. . . . I can't! I'm in despair, godpa. . . . I'm in despair! It's so unbearably difficult!

ORLOVSKY (*alarmed*). What's wrong? My duckie, my beauty! . . .

SONYA. Let's remain here. . . . Let's stay here a little while.

ORLOVSKY. One moment it's take me away, the other moment let's stay! . . . I can't make you out. . . .

SONYA. Here to-day I have lost my happiness. . . . It's unbearable! . . . Oh, godpa dear, why am I still alive? (*Embracing him.*) Oh, if you knew, if you knew!

ORLOVSKY. I'll give you some water. . . . Let's sit down. . . . Come!

DYADIN. What's wrong? Sophie Alexandrovna dear . . . you mustn't, I am all in a tremble! . . . (*Tearfully.*) I can't bear to see it! . . . My dear child! . . .

SONYA. Ilya Ilyich dear, drive me over to the fire! I implore you!

ORLOVSKY. What do you want with the fire? What will you do there?

SONYA. I implore you, drive me over to the fire, or I'll walk there. I'm in despair. . . . Godpa, it's hard, unbearably hard! Drive me over to the fire.

(*Enter* KHROUSCHOV *hurriedly.*)

[II]

The same and KHROUSCHOV.

KHROUSCHOV (*shouting*). Ilya Ilyich!

DYADIN. Here! What is it you want?

KHROUSCHOV. I can't walk, let me have your horse.

SONYA (*recognizing* KHROUSCHOV, *and crying out joyfully*). Mikhail Lvovich! (*Going towards him.*) Mikhail Lvovich! (*To* ORLOVSKY.) Go away, godpa dear, I have something to say to him. (*To* KHROUSCHOV.) Mikhail Lvovich, you said that you would love another . . . (*To* ORLOVSKY.) Go away, godpa! . . . (*To* KHROUSCHOV.) I am another now . . . I only want the truth. . . . Nothing, nothing but the truth! I love you, I love you, I love . . .

ORLOVSKY. Now I see! (*laughing*).

DYADIN. That is fascinating!

SONYA (*to* ORLOVSKY). Go away, godpa dear! (*To* KHROUSCHOV.) Yes, yes, only the truth and nothing else! . . . Speak then, speak! . . . I've said everything. . . .

KHROUSCHOV (*embracing her*). My darling!

SONYA. Don't go, godpa dear! . . . When you told me of your love, I panted for joy, but I was fettered by prejudices. I was prevented from giving you a true answer just as father is prevented from smiling on Elena. Now I am free! . . .

ORLOVSKY (*laughing aloud*). Singing in tune at last! Scrambled out on to the bank! I have the honour to congratulate you (*bowing low*). Ah, you naughty, naughty children!

DYADIN (*embracing* KHROUSCHOV). Misha, my dear boy, how glad you make me! Misha, dear boy!

ORLOVSKY (*embracing and kissing* SONYA). My darling, my little canary! . . . My dear little goddaughter! (SONYA *laughing aloud.*) Now you've started!

KHROUSCHOV. I can hardly grasp it all! . . . Let me have a word with her. Don't get in our way. . . . Pray, go away! . . .

(*Enter* FYODOR *and* JULIE.)

[12]

The same, FYODOR, *and* JULIE.

JULIE. But it's all a fib, Fyodor dear! You're fibbing!

ORLOVSKY. Sh-sh! Quiet, boys! My rascal is coming here. Let us hide ourselves, quick! Do!

(ORLOVSKY, DYADIN, KHROUSCHOV, *and* SONYA *hide themselves.*)

FYODOR. I left my whip and gloves here.

JULIE. But it's all a fib!

FYODOR. Well, let it be a fib! . . . What of it? I don't yet want to go to your house. . . . Let's walk for a while, and then we will go. . . .

JULIE. You are a nuisance! (*clapping her hands*). Now, isn't that Waffle a silly! The table is not yet cleared! Some one might have stolen the samovar. . . . Oh, Waffle, Waffle—an

old man, and yet he has less sense than a baby!

DYADIN (*aside*). Thanks!

JULIE. As we came up I heard some one laughing. . . .

FYODOR. It's the peasant women bathing! . . . (*Picking up a glove.*) There's some one's glove. . . . Sonya's. . . . To-day Sonya behaved as though she were bitten by a fly. She's in love with the Wood Demon. She's in love with him up to her eyes, and he, the blockhead, does not see it!

JULIE (*angrily*). Where are we going then?

FYODOR. To the dyke. . . . Let's go for a walk. . . . There's no finer spot in the whole district. . . . A beauty!

ORLOVSKY (*aside*). My sonnie, my beauty, his fine beard! . . .

JULIE. I just heard a voice.

FYODOR (*reciting*). "Here are wonders, the Wood Demon loiters, the mermaid sits on the branches." . . . Yes, old chap! (*clapping her on the shoulder*).

JULIE. I'm not a chap.

FYODOR. Let us reason it out peacefully. Listen, Julie dear! I've gone through fire and water. . . . I am already thirty-five, and have no status except that of lieutenant in the Serbian army and Non. Com. in the Russian reserve. I'm dangling between the sky and the earth. . . . I must change my mode of life, and you see . . . do you understand, I've now a fancy in my head that if I were to marry, a huge change will happen in my life! . . .

Do marry me, do! I ask for no one better.

. . .

JULIE (*confused*). H'm! . . . You see . . . you first reform, Fyodor dear.

FYODOR. Well, don't bargain like a gipsy! Speak straight out!

JULIE. I'm shy! . . . (*Looking round.*) Stop, some one might come in or overhear us! . . . I believe Waffle is looking through the window.

FYODOR. There's no one.

JULIE (*falling on his neck*). Fedenka!

(SONYA *laughs aloud;* ORLOVSKY, DYADIN *and* KHROUSCHOV *laugh, clap their hands and shout:* "Bravo! Bravo!")

FYODOR. Ugh! How you frightened us! Where did you come from?

SONYA. Julie dear, I congratulate you! And you may congratulate me! . . . (*Laughter, kisses, noise.*)

DYADIN. That is fascinating! That is fascinating!

(*Curtain.*)

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